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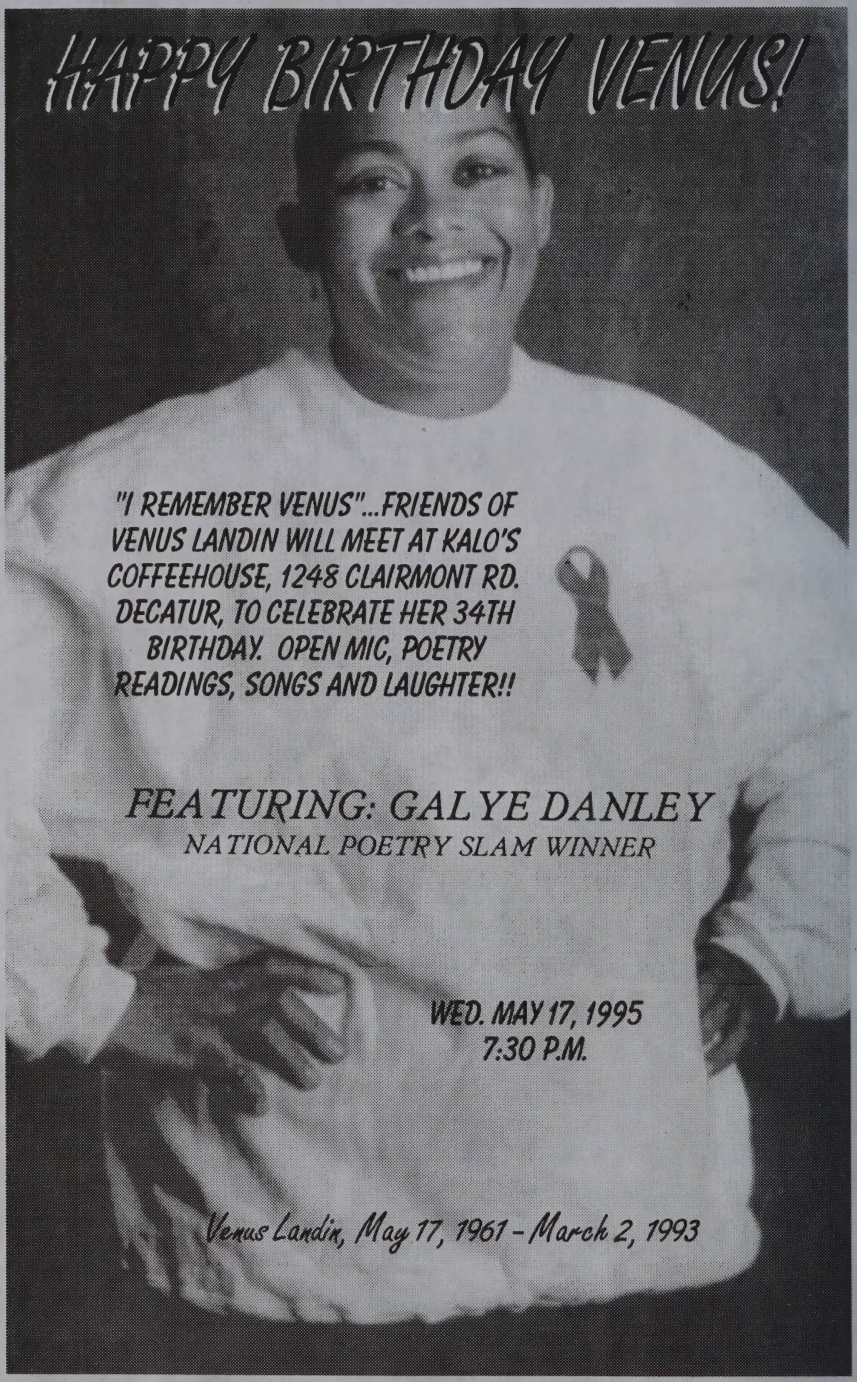
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PHILADELPHIA
Giavonni's Room

Jacob Lawrence
The Migration Series

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Venus™

May 1995
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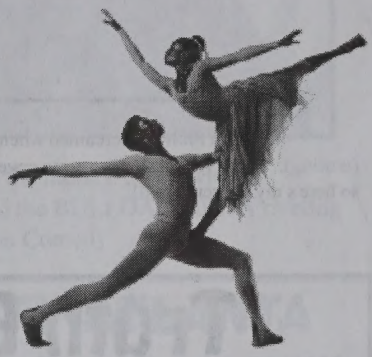

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LETTERS

Dear Venus Magazine!

I would like to comment on your story of "A Gentle and Fiercely determined Hero, Mr. Tre` Johnson." So many of our young brothers and sisters are their backs on P.W.A.'s. when such a courageous young man such as Tre` chose to face the issue head on, winning the battle.

Being a Northside Alumni myself, his story hit home, touching my heart, touching deeply. How could such a young and talented man at age 19 become HIV positive? This just goes to show that our youth need to be better educated on AIDS and I think young men like Tre` should continue to reach out to people to say that even in the eye of pain life can go on and you can enrich others' lives by being strong, through public speaking, writing and having the general knowledge that by being healthy in the mind can make you healthy bodywise and prolong your life.

Sincerely,
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JoJo
Age:
"Timeless"
Status:
"Ready"
Career:
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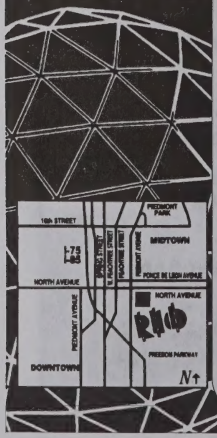

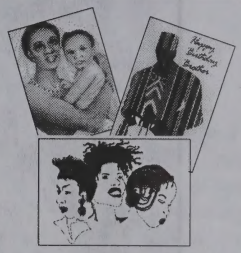

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People on the Move:

Jacob Lawrence

The Migration Series

by Jacqueline Frances

This month the High Museum of Art exhibits THE MIGRATION, a series of 60 paintings by the African-American artist, Jacob Lawrence. Painted in 1940-41, the series depicts a mass movement in which millions of southern black people moved North in search of employment and greater opportunities. The scenes depict the poor living conditions in the rural South, the migrants at teeming train stations and their journeys, and the "big city" life - for all its advantages and drawbacks - that they came to know.

Lawrence was born in 1917 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the son of southern migrants on their way north. His parents separated in 1924, and after spending some time in Pennsylvania, his mother moved him and his siblings to Harlem in 1930. There, Lawrence studied art in children's programs and the Harlem Art Workshop, mingling with other African-American cultural elite, including the writers Langston Hughes and Claude McKay and the artists Charles Alston and Augusta Savage. Lawrence also worked for the Federal Arts Project, a Depression era government program that paid artists to make murals in the Harlem community, and earned a scholarship to the American Artists School, a "downtown" Manhattan institution.

Lawrence started painting seriously in 1937. His first subject was Toussaint L'Ouvertre, the Haitian patriot and leader of the nineteenth-century rebellion against French Colonial rule. Sub-

sequently, he completed narrative series on the lives of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas. History, he found, could not be contained in a single image, a single painting.

With THE MIGRATION, Lawrence lifted the story of ordinary people like his parents to a lofty plane of significance. Lawrence says during an earlier interview, "It was inevitable that I would be doing this subject." The intellectual Alain Locke brought the series,

then called THE MIGRATION OF THE NEGRO, to the attention of a Manhattan art gallery owner, Edith Halpert. In turn, she arranged for several panels of THE MIGRATION to be reproduced in the November, 1941 issue of Fortune Magazine. After the series was exhibited at her gallery and several national venues, Halpert brokered its sale to the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Modern Art. These museums share the series equally with each institution buying 30 paintings.

THE MIGRATION exemplifies Jacob Lawrence's modern style. It is a uniformly designed composition in which colors and shapes seem to fit together like puzzle pieces. Each scene is painted in bold colors, and human figures and ordinary objets are abstracted, distorted, and generally simplified into geometric forms. To succinctly narrate his subject of people on the move, Lawrence painted the mere essence of things. As a result, THE MIGRATION has a readable immediacy; staccato, migratory movement is expressed in the images themselves.

Each panel is accompanied by sentence-long caption, which have been adapted for the contemporary audience of the nineties. Growing up, Lawrence was influenced by the church sermons and the lectures of Harlem's street orators and lay historians. His text, strengthened by the power of the word, accentuates the rhythms of his colorful images. The series ends where it begins; panel number sixty of migrants crowded at a southern train station and the caption reads, "And the migrants kept coming."

Lawrence, who lives in Seattle, Washington with his wife, Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, who is also a well known painter. THE MIGRATION will be the subject of public lectures. Go see the work of an African-American master artist.

"Jacob Lawrence - The Migration Series," at the High Museum of Art, now through June 27, 1995. The High Museum is located at 1280 Peachtree street N.E. Atlanta, Georgia.
Museum Hours: Tues.-Sat, 10AM-5PM, Fri. open until 9PM, Sun. Noon-5PM. Admission for Adults is $6, students and senior citizens $5. Admission free on Thurs. 1-5PM. Phone (404) 733-4444.

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SPIRITUALITY

WHAT'S THIS "ABOMINATION" THING?

Teaching the idea of learning to LOVE one's self has been the intention of this column through the first four issues of the magazine. I have intentionally wanted to stay away from discussing specific "religious" ideology because, in my own opinion, it has been used to support and perpetuate the extreme feelings of "self hatred" that is found in the gay/lesbian community. I wanted us to have an opportunity to realign the connection to our true-Spiritual selves before we looked at how religion has utilized its teachings in an attempt to destroy that connection. It is now my desire to give you some insight as to how we can utilize our religious beliefs more appropriately. Let's begin by defining Spirituality as the expression of the Infinite. Religion is our belief about the Infinite and the practice of these beliefs. Spirituality is Love without condition and religion is Love as long as... .

Living in America in 1995, we live in a culture where Judeo-Christian beliefs and rules are used to set the standards for how we are to live. Therefore it is important for us to understand where these beliefs and rules come from (their history). We have been taught a Judeo-Christian religion where one source of information was law, the bible. A book that is a compilation of writings over a 4000 year period. Over the next 2000 years it has been rewritten and interpreted through many languages and cultures for many reasons. It is a compilation of stories that were originally written to tell the history of the Jewish people. In other words, its probably one of the best "history books" ever published. It was never meant to be used as a replacement for directly connecting with Spirit. It was never meant to be taken literally.

It is a book of Jewish customs, psychology, idioms and folklore. Over 40% of it is an account of dreams and visions. The laws that are written in the bible were intended for a tribe of people who felt that they were God's chosen people. It was a tribe of African descendants who were constantly being invaded and scattered throughout the land. Therefore, their major concern became one of continuing the race. These laws were not written for anyone not born into this tribe. It wasn't until after the death of Jesus, (a man who felt that his mission was to reform his people, the Jews, and not start a new religion), that these laws were given to other people.

We are constantly told, by Chris-

tians, that homosexuality is an abomination and all homosexuals are damned to hell. When one studies the book of Laviticus what we find is that any behavior which was considered a threat to the race was abomination. Looking upon anyone's nakedness, outside yourself or your spouse, (including your mother, father, sister, brother etc.), was an abomination. Entering into the temple unclean, (uncircumcised or on a menstrual cycle), was an abomination.

It was believed that the male planted the new baby into the woman and her only involvement in the birth process was to incubate the new life. Therefore, ejaculation should only take place within the vagina of a woman or a baby would be lost. And these are only a few examples. It is important to note that these laws were important to an ancient Middle Eastern culture thousands of years ago. In 1995 America, our laws change every time the wind blows. Yet we have not yet been able to shake the fears of the ancient Jews. Have we not yet evolved from the fears of our ancient ancestors?

The biblical writers never wrote anything of loving relationships or gender orientation as we know them to be today. So we don't really know how they felt about what we call homosexuality. Only that they were afraid of genocide. When the man Jesus came along he began to teach the idea of unconditional love to his tribe. He felt that to judge or condemn anyone was the true abomination.

The idea of unconditional love was not new to the world. It was taught in many other cultures prior to the birth of the man Jesus. It is known that Jesus traveled and studied in many of these cultures (in Africa, Asia and Europe) where he developed many of his beliefs. Many of these so called indigenous cultures revered those of "same gender orientation". Homosexuals were seen as being more evolved than others and "procreation" was no longer a part of their earth experience. They were the more Spiritual individuals of their races. Native Americans called them "Two Spirited". In African cultures they were the healers and held direct connection to the ancestors.

Kahlil Gibran writes in "THE PROPHET", But to whom life is a rock, and the law a chisel with which they would carve it in their own likeness? What of the cripple who hates dancers?... And of him who comes early to the wedding-feast, and when over-fed and tired goes his way saying that all feasts are violation and all feasters lawbreakers? What shall I say of these save that they too stand in the sunlight, but with their backs to the sun? They see only their shadows, and their shadows are their laws.

Man made laws are always designed to benefit the man that makes them or interprets them as his/ her own. The question is do you accept living in their shadow, under their laws. Or do you do you study and interpret the laws finding the truth that celebrates you. I have learned that it is not important to judge others by the laws they create and interpret for themselves. I only judge the laws that I interpret as my own.

Let's agree that it is time to evolve from the fears and beliefs of the ancient ones. Kamau's Law: I AM NOT AN ABOMINATION. I AM HIGHLY EVOLVED. I AM SPIRIT EXPRESSING AS A HOMOSEXUAL. I AM UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

Kamau Ifoma is a free lance writer and founder of Home Free Ministry

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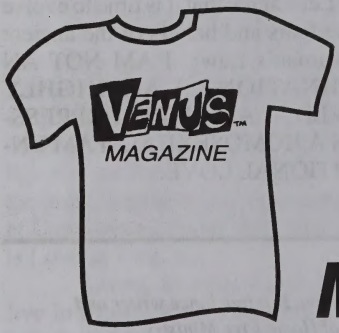

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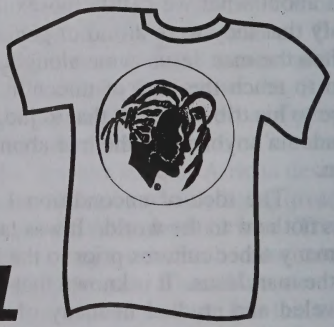

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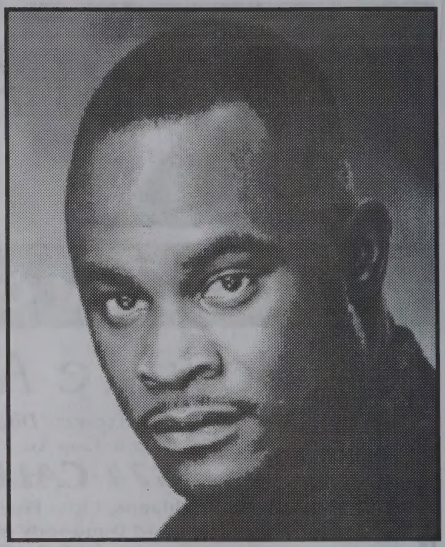
Name:
Sabastian T. Summers
Age:
25
Career:
Masters student at Clark Atlanta University, Criminal Justice Major
Last Book Read:
THE MISEDUCATION OF THE NEGRO
By Carter G. Woodson
Status:
Single
Hometown:
Orangeburg, S.C.



Sabastian T. Summers performs this month in the Alliance Theatre's "Cotton Patch Gospel." As a singer/actor he has also appeared in "Bubblin' Brown Sugar" and Jomandi's "Dreamgirls". "In order to hear the music you must first pay the piper, for what you do today will determine your tomorrow."

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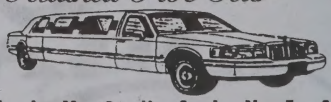

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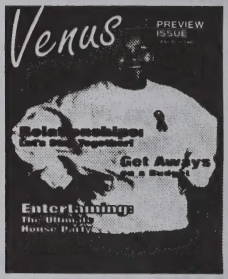

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MISS SIPPIE

A Cotsville Story

by Shirlene Holmes

It was a sunny morning in Cotsville. Sippie was sitting, spitting and burning hair on the front porch of her old white weather-beaten house. The tobacco was bitter and good this morning as she sprayed her brown juice on the grass. She had just cleaned her hair from the comb and was setting it afire. The smoke from her burning curls slightly choked her, but she cooked it, still fearing that if she throwed it away, someone might get a hold of it and rule her spirit.

So happen, she looked up.

"Good Lord and a quarter!" Miss Sippie howled looking over her porch railing as Missionary Porter come passing by, softly humming a song of Zion.

"You looking like new money, Missionary P."

"How you doing, Miss Sippie?"

"I'm here by being careful. How you?"

"I'm just leanin' and dependin' on Him."

"Now I done told you Missionary, that you can lean and depend on me whenever you want."

"Don't get started, Miss Sippie."

"I been started; you got to come on and let me finish."

"You have a good day, now. Jesus loves you."

"I ain't worried 'bout Jesus. When you gonna love me?"

"I'll be praying for ya, Miss Sippie."

Sippie was so carried away with Missionary, even the rejection tickled her so sweet. She just grinned and spit some more. Missionary carried on down the road over to the post office to get her money order as if their little conversation hadn't even raised her blood pressure. But truth is, it did. It sure did. Every time she saw Miss Sippie, Missionary would have to regulate her mind.

See, the two of them been at this cat and mouse thing for a long, long time. Miss Sippie Lee moved to Cotsville about 25 years ago when she got run out of Chicago for killing Virginia Beach's husband, CeDell. Back then, you only got a year and a day when you killed a nigga, which is what CeDell was. At least to Sippie. She would have done the time, but her best friend, Iola, got her a ticket and she left the city for Cotsville 'for the cops could catch her or take her name.' She wouldn't have killed CeDell if he hadn't put Virginia in the hospital that last time. He had done it before, but this time... this time Virginia lost her blood and her life.

When they first met, Sippie was trying to be respectful, knowing the gal had a husband, but Virginia was writing checks so big, Sippie just had to cash 'em. Hell, you would too, the way Virginia was. She was one of them see line women: empty you pockets, wreck your days, make you love her, then shoo fly away...

Virginia was married Monday

through Friday, but when Friday night roll around, she spent the weekend in Sippie's lap. And you would've, too.

Sippie was 'bout 26 inches in the waist then and wore her cummerbund real tight to match her bow tie. Her hair was red as fire, laid with waves like an ocean, baby. And she had a full gold tooth in the front of her mouth. Her skin was high yellow like lemon pound cake, sweet.

Make you want to bite and eat it. That's what all the gals say. In them days, when she put her rags on, 24 hours wouldn't go by without somebody stopping her in the streets, thinkin she was a famous singer or something.

Sippie's fingers are gnarled with arthritis now, but back then, she was known for the diamond rocks she sported on her pinkies and her gold watch. She had hands tough enough to fix car engines, but tender enough to rub the gals the right way. And she rubbed 'em, too, till they hollered for help.

CeDell knew all about Virginia and Sippie. They had been carrying on 'bout a year when he found out. He though he'd get his wife back, but Sippie messed up and fell in love with Virginia. Usually, she was stronger than that. When it come to gals, she just picked them up, danced them around and put them back down. Sippie always say, "Just don't let them gals look you straight in the eye. If they get you eyes, they get your heart."

Oh, but Virginia had them cat eyes. Gray-like and switch to green or water blue, 'pending on how she feel or what she had on. Mary people thought she was a devil chile because of them eyes. Sippie wasn't scared of them eyes or the devil and eased up on Virginia one of them Friday nights when she was out catting around.

She wasn't gonna get in no trouble, Sippie knew better.

But you know, they was up in the bed in Sippie's room. Sippie had just put her cigar out and was nursing on Virginia's breast when the softness got to her and she looked up at that gal's face. Right in them eyes.

Goddamn.

Sippie wasn't no more good from that day on. When Virginia say, "Jump!" Sippie just ask, "Baby, How high? How high?"

Virginia halfway act like she loved Sippie. Put her black dress on and trapped herself between Sippie's strong legs and made that gold toothed woman so happy. Miss Sippie woulda slapped her momma if Virginia just say she wanted her to.

Sippie was dropping weight fast then. Couldn't eat nothing but Virginia. Couldn't smell nothing but her scent. Loss her mind every time Sunday night come and Virginia would have to go back home. She was in a state.

Sippie's best friend, Iola say, while they was at work fixing cars, "She got you bad, Sippie. You don't know a wrench from a screw. You better go see that soothsayer and get that spell offa you."

Sippie kept on denying it till this Sunday night when CeDell went foolish. He was drinking that Vodka and it told him to come cussing up to Sippie's room. She stomped a mud hole in his ass that night. Sippie don' like to fight, it messes up her good clothes, but she will if she has to. And that night, she had to. CeDell got to calling her a "Big BULLDAGGER!" in the street. But she was more man than him.

Sippie warned him saying, "go on home, CeDell, you ain't got enough be-

hind to take the whopping I'll put on you."

Well you know, Vodka make you stupid, so CeDell kept on, just running off at the mouth 'bout how wasn't no bitch woman gonna play him for a fool. He was talking that trash till Sippie couldn't take it no more and hit him like a hammer in the mouth. Blood was running everywhere. She cut him so hard, took a plug of meat outta his bottom lip. CeDell come to himself and hauled of and hit Sippie in her face, breaking vessels all up and down her head. She took off her rings and watch then, and beat that man so bad even she felt sorry for him. Matter fact, folks in Chicago still say Sippie put something on him even the good Lord couldn't take off.

CeDell got up from the ground that Sunday night and put a butcher knife in the center of Virginia's breasts. And that gal sho nuff died by morning. Everybody say he died, but Sippie don't know for sure; she had to leave town before the next day broke.

Iola come running to Sippie's door that very same night, banging, "SIPPIE, SIPPIE!!! CeDell done killed Virginia! Shit, girl, what you gonna do?" Sippie's blood stop running, cold. She got her gun from under the pillow. She couldn't find CeDell at first, but she caught him coming up out of Ressie's bar and Grill. He was hung over about to vomit in the street.

"CeDell, you a walking dead man", Sippie hollered. "Say your prayers."

Everybody cleared the street.

CeDell puked.

"I didn't mean to hurt her," he say.

"CeDell, you killed my baby; I'm a have to kill you."

"She my wife."

"I let you have her through the week, You know she mine."

"I had the papers on her."

"I don't care what you had, you got me now."

And Sippie shot him. Sho did. And he fell over dead. She went to the hospital kissed Virginia's lips good-bye saying, "Go on to Glory, baby; I took care of everything."

I wouldn't lie, that very night Sippie got on the Amtrak and made it to Cotsville. When the sun came up that next day, she was sitting at her great aunt Mattie's kitchen table eating hot water cornbread, scrambled eggs and scrapple. Great aunt Mattie died that next June and Sippie been owning that old white weathered house ever since.

She ain't never hear tell of what happened to Virginia in the end. She know they buried CeDell in potter's field, but what happen to her gray-eyed baby, she don't know to this day. She sit on that porch whining a blues tune sometimes, hoping that cat-eyed gal would just come by and soothe her. It ain't happen yet.

Sippie toothless now and her hair ain't red no more, but the fire ain't no where out. And you know, wasn't long after she got to Cotsville that she started burning for Missionary Porter. The flame was so hot and high, even Sippie had to sometimes pray.

She met Missionary Porter through Margaret who, when she was alive, tried her damnedest to save Sippie's soul. Margaret say, "Sippie don't you want to clean up your life.?" See everybody in Cotsville know she had killed a man. Cleveretta say, Sippie even showed her the gun she did it wit. Mother Martha was wondering what Cleveretta was doing up in that old weathered house with

Miss Sippie. "Young womens ain't got no business messing around old red-headed heifers with a history of sporting neck-ties and girls on their arms," Mother Martha was quick to announce. Didn't she know that curiosity killed the cat?

Cleveretta wasn't satisfied till she got up in Sippie's business. She run right over to Teresa's with a box of Argo starch and two RC colas up under her arm. She say, "Girl, she one of them. Just like Mary and Lou."

Teresa say, draining the juice off her Virginia ham, "I don't know how she do it; women all in the bed and everything. Makes me itch all over to think of it." Cleveretta say, "I don't know how she do it neither, but if she like it, I love it. I couldn't put my mouth on no woman," Teresa say, crunching down on some starch. "You think they put powder 'tween the sheets, like I do, to cool they skin off?" "No chile," replied Cleveretta, wiping her dusty mouth with the back of her hand; "Them gals like to burn."

Margaret gave up on Sippie's soul and visited her up until the very day she died in Missionary Porter's arms. Sippie respect Margaret, so she had to keep her distance. See, she found Missionary too good for her eyes, and couldn't trust herself. And everybody in Cotsville know that Missionary Porter didn't have a nickel in that dime. She wasn't straying away from Margaret no way, no how.

When Margaret died, Sippie went and paid her last respect. Missionary was close to catatonic. Martha swear Missionary Porter didn't even blink at the funeral. Cousin Mildred would swear on a stack of bibles that she saw Missionary cry. Gardenia and Magnolia, the Flowers' twin daughters, say it ain't true. Didn't nary a drop of water fall from Missionary's eyes.

Sippie know Missionary's heart is buried in that grave with Margaret, but the dog and the devil rises each time the sweet saint happens by.

Sippie snatched her another plug of tobacco, so glad she decided to finish her hair on the porch this morning. She rocked steady in her chair, feeling the creaks in her bones working their way out with each stroke. Along come Missionary again, her errand at the post office run.

"Ha' mercy! Missionary P; what you doing to me?"

"I'm leaving you alone."

"I'd get up and walk you home if you let me spend the night."

"Night's to long for that, Miss Sippie, but I 'preciate the thought. You take care of yourself. Don't you go nowhere, hear?"

"Don't you worry 'bout it. I'll wait here rocking."

"Seem like you need a new chair. I hear that one creaking clean over here."

"You need to come on up here and be my new chair, Missionary."

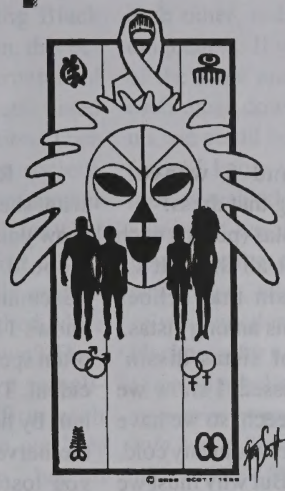
"I'm gonna pray your strength in the Lord, Miss Sippie. I got to go visit the sick and shut in. Bye, now."

Sippie watched Missionary slowly step on down the road. She grinned all over herself and rocked that old chair even harder and sang:

"You can rock me, baby.
You can rock me all night long.
You can rock me, baby Rock me.
You can rock me all night long.
You can rock me, baby; rock me till
My back ain't got no bone."

The thought of it kept Miss Sippie wet and sassy till way that afternoon when she got up to go inside to take her pressure pill.

THE MAGIC IS COMING



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SHE AIN'T ALL THAT

by JoJo

"Fake nails and a weave!" "NO!...she ain't wearing that dress!"

Sistas dissin' sistas (putting each other down). "She ain't all that." It's a painful common refrain that echoes throughout conversations among sistas.

The problem of sistas dissin' sistas needs to be addressed. I know we share the freedom of speech, so we have the right to express ourselves in any cold, callous way we choose. But why must we choose to use our words to undermine each other? By listening in silence we condone that the sista being attacked for not being "all that" is left powerless.

Remember the saying "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me?" We used to sing these words in elementary school. Words do hurt. They carry enormous power.

Can you imagine the effects of being told that you're not good enough? Too fat? Too Black? Too ugly? Such words are detrimental to a sista's self esteem. I have let sistas strip me of my power. Defining me with:

"You wear too much make-up,"

"Why you gotta be like that?"

"Your hair's too short."

I have made so many alterations that I almost gave up on me.

Recently when I was out with a sista, she said, "I'll be so glad when you grow your hair back." The only response I could muster was a high-pitched "Excuuuuse me, Girlfriend!" This sista knows I like my hair short, and we had often spent time together prior to this incident. That's why I was so shocked and hurt by her blunt disclosure. I wish I had the nerve to say, "I'd like you better if you lost thirty pounds." Instead, I restrained myself, as usual. And this was my home girl dissin' me to my face. Perhaps she didn't think what she said was a put down. I know girlfriend is entitled to her opinion, which she obviously felt compelled to share with me, disregarding the cost to my feelings. Part of the reason I now wear my hair short is because of the insults I suffered as a child being ridiculed for having long hair. But sistas still make a fuss over my hair.

"I like it better long."

"I like it better short."

Sistas, I'd like it better if you would get off my ass. Stop trying to fix my hair, because I ain't in search of a makeover. The key point here, sistas, is acceptance, which is synonymous with respect. Respecting another sista for herself, not what you think she should be doing to meet your standards.

As the late Audre Lorde said, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies of me, and eaten alive." These words have

become a part of my daily spiritual armor against the attacks of "She ain't all that."

Many of our ancestors were programmed to believe that being Black wasn't all that. For some reason, this belief has particularly been perpetuated among Black females, and it gets passed on from generation to generation. Then the daughter promenades into society, unleashing her vicious rage on another sista. We don't even recognize it for what it is. We have sat back in comfort, allowing these actions to be socially acceptable. How often have we laughed while hearing a sista being put down? How many times have we offered a compliment to a sista? We will affirm each other's esteem with, "You go girl," or "You really look nice today," but no sooner that girlfriend turns her back, the knife of, "I can't stand that bitch; she ain't all that" stabs her in cold blood.

The other night I was sitting in a night club with a couple of women. They put down every woman who entered the room. I finally clapped my hands together and said, "ENOUGH ALREADY!" And with that I left the "She ain't all that" party. They questioned each other with, "What's wrong with her?"

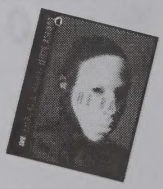
I once heard Ms. Maya Angelou say in an interview that she doesn't allow people to put others down in her presence. I thought to myself, "Way to go, Ms. Angelou! But did I implement the same practice in my own life? No.

To judge my sista is to judge myself. We are all mirror reflections of each other. What we didn't like in ourselves we project onto another sista. If we can't accept ourselves, we can't appreciate or even accept the difference among us. It says in the Bible that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. It's a two-pronged commandment, for we can't carry out the part about loving each other if we can't love ourselves.

Sista's we are all different from each other, today. I thank God for my uniqueness. If we could just exert some of the same energy we put into putting each other down into lifting each other up, we could be a much more powerful force. I know that if we learn to really look at each other, we will see things we admire. If we choose to compliment the positive rather than comment on the imperfections, we can begin to see in ourselves something worth celebrating. Our blackness, for example. Because contrary to popular belief, it is "all that."

JoJo lives in Philadelphia and is working on a novella.

MEET THE AUTHOR



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RELATIONSHIPS

WHEN IS IT TIME TO MOVE ON?

by Carla S. Anderson, MA

Often bad relationships become fodder for may a stand-up comedian. How many times have each of us had a friend approach us regarding whether they should give their relationship 'one more chance' or leave? Questioning the stability of a relationship is something that each of us has done at one time or another. So when should the red flag go up regarding unhealthy behavior in a relationship? Just what experiences qualify as 'I think it's time to move on' criteria?

One common relationship speed bump involves communication snafus. This can range from minor irritations and idiosyncrasies to verbal abusiveness and one partner or both not being heard. Some communication issues can be workable with the aid of self help materials such as books, audio and/or visual tapes or couples retreats. However, if your partner uses extreme condemnations, verbal abuse of attacks on your vulnerable areas, a more direct intervention of short or long term therapy should be considered. In some cases the relationship becomes safer for both partners and is salvageable.

Some couples find themselves trapped in a 'tit for tat' destruction of each others' personal or shared property. For example, you arrive home late and forget to call, and in retaliation, your lover destroys your favorite earrings. This is a situation where direct action should be demanded. You must acknowledge that this is a problem and obtain help. If you cannot agree to seek help, then the healthy choice would be to leave the relationship. On the other hand, if you both engage in a joint,(and the key word here is joint), effort to deal with this issue and eliminate this behavior, then you may choose to stay.

Be very clear about the difference between active and passive action. Active action means acknowledging the issues that arise and initiating the work in-

volved in addressing those issues, i.e., therapy or self-help materials, etc. On the other hand, passive action involves holding back or ignoring the issues that arise hoping things will change or get better.

If it becomes a part of your relationship to threaten physical violence or engage in it, then ACTIVE ACTION must be taken because your relationship is definitely unhealthy. Suppose the abuse has been acknowledged and you both agree to begin couples therapy, but every time an appointment is scheduled one of you has an excuse not to make it OR a year has gone by and neither of you has made the first appointment. Honey, it may be time to move on!

Another area of abuse which is often overlooked in the black gay and lesbian community is couples with children. If verbal or physical abuse is directed at your children by your partner, make immediate changes or terminate your relationship! Another serious form of abuse involves the damage you children may internalize simply because they are witness to your unhealthy relationship. Again, if ACTIVE ACTION is pursued, then you may choose to remain in the relationship. However, if no change is initiated and followed through with, then it is time to move on!

The final issue some find themselves confronting involves infidelity. You must first question how your relationship is being defined. If both partners agree to an open relationship, then engage in a heightened level of communication to keep each other informed of emotional changes that occur. Often couples are mistaken in their thinking that an open relationship requires less focus on the dyad. This is farthest from the truth! If you feel that you have been bullied into accepting your partner's affairs, TAKE ACTIVE ACTION! If you find yourself seeking others outside of the relationship to fulfill you emotional, sexual and spiritual needs, again, take active action. Open relationships, if mutually agreed upon, are possible. Infidelity, if acknowledged, does not have to lead to the destruction of the relationship. It is a much different case if one affair after another are swept under the rug! Resentment and the dissolution of basic trust signal 'DO Something!' or make preparations to leave.

The primary key involved in the decision to remain or move on is the issue of safety. If you are not feeling safe emotionally or physically, take immediate active action. If your emotional, sexual and spiritual needs are not being met or are being neglected, a wide range of intervention are available. For example, couples' workshops, scheduling time to discuss specific issues before they lead to an emotional explosion, short or long term therapy, finding joint activities to share, isolating time to pamper oneself or utilizing self help aids.

Intimate relationships, like other relationships, are great when they are great and a drag when things are not so great. These ups and downs are expected and should not result in making damaging sacrifices. However, if you find yourself asking 'should I stay?' more than enjoying the relationship with your partner overall, then this question deserves your immediate attention and ACTIVE ACTION!!

Carla Anderson is a psychotherapist practicing in Atlanta.

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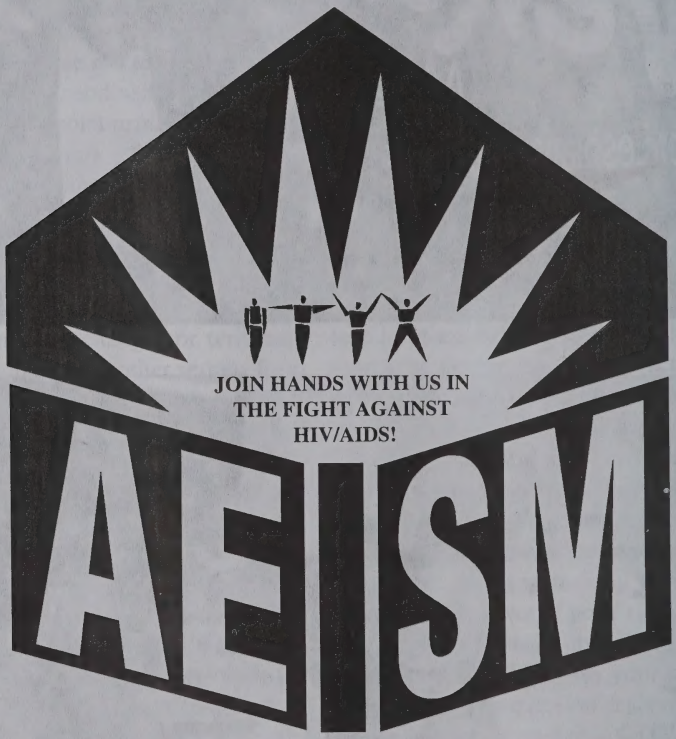

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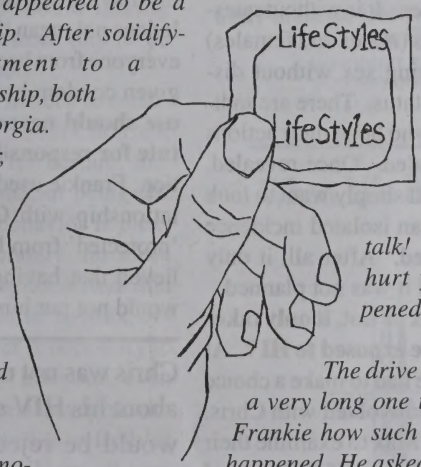
HEALTH

SEX, LIES AND HIV

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph.D.

Frankie and Max have been partners for over three years. Max, a 35 year old dental hygienist approached Frankie while at his best friend's birthday party in Washington, D.C. Frankie, a 33 year old civil engineer was pleased that Max initiated the introduction... Over time, both grew fond of each other and ultimately entered what appeared to be a committed relationship. After solidifying their commitment to a monogamous relationship, both moved to Atlanta, Georgia. Every year however, both would drive to Washington, D.C. to connect with old friends. Frankie would insist on staying with Chris, a former classmate and best friend.



At Chris' annual Memorial Day barbecue, Max could not help but mentally question the special way his partner and best friend made 'eyes' while standing very close to one another. Max tried to ignore what was happening internally, yet he sensed 'fowl play'. Later, he confronted Frankie and was made to feel guilty for not trusting him, after all, they had been in this relationship for over three years. When the opportunity presented itself, Max confront both Frankie (partner) and Chris (best friend) as to what was really going on. Total silent hit the air... No words were offered from either Frankie or Chris. Finally, Max asked if they had been intimate with one another. Again, the room was met with total silence. In a very low voice, Chris said, 'We need to talk! We did not mean to hurt you. It only happened once.'

The drive back to Atlanta was a very long one indeed. Max asked Frankie how such a thing could have happened. He asked Frankie did he and Chris use a condom? Again, Frankie was very quite. Max responded to the silence with the response, "I guess that means no one thought about protection?" Still no response from Frankie. This was too much for Max to handle given he had never shared with Frankie that Chris was HIV positive. Max never talked about

what his best friend Chris shared during their many private conversations regarding his HIV status. Now, Max would have to address the implications of Frankie's and Chris' sexual infidelity on his life..."

Frankie, Max and Chris do not represent an isolated case. Surely, you have experienced or heard of similar scenarios as the one depicted about -- Sex, Lies and HIV. Last month Venus addressed condoms -- its misuse, under-use and non-use. To capitalized on that foundation, Venus felt it necessary to revisit the topic once again. Max and Frankie were lovers for three years, however, as a result of situational variables (i.e., sensation seeking, being irresponsible, being unprepared, etc.), Frankie not only violated the integrity of the relationship, but introduced HIV as a major health concern to his partner. It is without question that individuals (males and females) are knowingly having sex without disclosing their HIV status. There are individuals like Chris who hope their actions will never be revealed. Once revealed, many like Chris will simply want to look at this scenario as an isolated incidence never to be repeated. After all, it only happened once and it was not planned.

Planned sex or not, it only takes one time to become exposed to HIV. At some point, Frankie had to make a choice to become sexually involved with Chris. Frankie has forced Max to examine their sexual history; question if this sort of thing has happened with others; wonder if Chris is really a best friend; feel embarrassed that others knew of Frankie's infidelity; consider HIV testing; and wonder if any one can be trusted to remain faithful in a relationship. Like many, Max hoped his relationship with Frankie would last a life time. So where does Max go from here?

First, it is very important to remember,

"HIV is alive in '95". Do not allow anyone to encourage you to participate in sex without the use of a condom.

This rule applies to those with prior history engaging in casual sex without using condoms and those who would like to maintain a monogamous relationship for a lifetime.

In this particular case, Frankie did not know Chris was HIV positive, but should have taken measures to ensure maximum protection. This does not justify having sex outside any partnership. It does not mean the condom will protect everyone from becoming exposed to HIV given condom breakage, etc. **Condom use should never be used as a substitute for responsible behavior.** In addition, Frankie used the security of his relationship with Chris to mean he was 'protected' from HIV. Frankie also believed that having sex with Chris once would not put him at risk.

Chris was not up front with Frankie about his HIV status in fear that he would be rejected and denied an opportunity to have sex. This type behavior is not uncommon.

Despite advances in HIV education, even a college trained dental hygienist (Frankie) and civil engineer (Chris) have not translated the prevention message

into everyday practice.

Remember this statement, "IT AIN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!" Repeat this statement to yourself when you are presented with easy opportunities to have sex with familiar faces. Many opportunities are presented to you in well-dressed, polished, soft-spoken, attractive, often muscular, well groomed and not so groomed, and what appears to be innocent and trustworthy individuals. There are many individuals like Chris, who have not taken the time to learn how to live (not die) with HIV -- being responsible for their actions. Should he take the time to do so, he would be less likely to lose a close friend like Max. Unfortunately, Chris' withholding his HIV status and knowingly having unprotected sex (regardless of his fear of rejection) could now bring his best friend into a similar experience they spent hours talking about. Would you consider this to be friendship? Certainly not.

Overall, Max will need to establish new boundaries with both Chris and Frankie. One thing is for certain, this matter should not go without being addressed. This type of behavior is inexcusable. There is absolutely no room for negotiation regarding consistent and proper condom use. Similar to Max, everyone must do whatever is necessary to reduce their risk of HIV infection, even if it means terminating relationships with unhealthy friendship and a unfaithful partner. Sex, Lies and HIV are all very serious subject matters that when combined could be costly. BE RESPONSIBLE, MAINTAIN INTEGRITY AND THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN.

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph.D., is a health and behavior scientist

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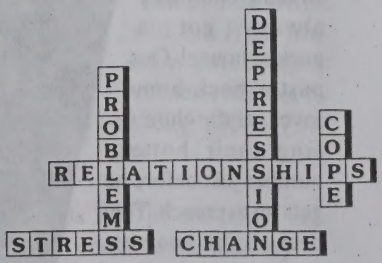

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The Alliance Theatre And The Midtown Music Festival '95 Bring Gospel Music Center Stage

By Charlene Cothran

Many of us who grew up in the choir stands of the traditional black church have witnessed the evolution of gospel music. "I didn't come for no form or fashion or no outside show to the world," we'd testify but down in our souls, we knew we were entertainers extraordinaire! If we didn't know it, the preachers did!! Any pastor with a smokin' choir has always got a packed house! Our pastor back home loves for the choir to sing their hottest number just before he gets up to preach. They heat up the congregation so hot, he barely gets to say three words before the saints are dancing down the isles!

Musical directors of Sounds of Blackness Gary Hines and Ann Bennett-Nesby

The gospel music industry simply exploded in the mid 1980's. This inspiring form of 'entertainment' is now responsible for the sale of everything from orange juice and aluminum foil to airline tickets and motion pictures. One of gospel music's latest clients is the Alliance Theatre Company. Tom Key's "Cotton Patch Gospel" has a roof-raising choir heating up center stage along with a blue grass band and the narration of Atlanta's own Carol Mitchell-Leon. The set spotlights the work of Georgia folk artist Howard Finster who asks, "What if Jesus was born in Georgia?"

For the first time in its ten year history, Cotton Patch Gospel will feature eight of the most talented gospel singers in Atlanta—AMY BANKS, SHILLA BENNING, STUART FLEMISTER, MADISON RIVERS JACKSON, ERIC MOORE, WANDA

REESE, ALESIA SUBLETT AND DEMITRICE TYLER WILLIAMS.

Currently a student in theatre at Agnes Scott College, Amy Banks has performed with several jazz bands and ensemble, and local theatres including the Horizon Theatre and Onstage Atlanta.

Shilla Benning's musical theatre credits include, among other, HEARTSTRINGS national tour; a world tour of MAMA I WANT TO SING, and BUBBLIN' BROWN SUGAR.

Stuart J.L. Flemister has appeared as a choir member on the reunion episode of "The Cosby Show." Flemister is also a former member of the Morehouse College Glee Club and the Atlanta Boys Choir.

Maison Rivers Jackson has appeared as Hoke Colburn in the Springer Opera House production of DRIVING MISS DAISY and has also appeared in MACBETH, as well as THE COLORED MUSEUM for Jomandi Productions.

The brother/sister team of Wanda Reese and Eric Moore have a combined experience of 30 years in the areas of writing, singing, and directing both traditional and contemporary gospel music. Moore has record with Georgia's All-State Men's Chorus; is a Georgia State Minister of music; and has directed the Bethesda Temple Recording Choir for 15 years.

Alesia R. Sublett has appeared in NEW BLACK VOICES and as a soloist in James Weldon Johnson's GOD'S TROMBONES at Morris Brown College. Sublett can also be heard performing the theme song for Atlanta's Channel 2, Saturday Morning AM New Show.

Demetrice Tyler Williams has appeared in such productions as BUBBLIN' BROWN SUGAR, THE COLORED MUSEUM, MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM, and in Jomandi's DREAMGIRLS.

COTTON PATCH GOSPEL will run at The Alliance Theatre, May 6-28. A portion of every ticket will go to benefit Habitat for Humanity. Tickets prices range from $13 to $34.75 and may be purchased at the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office and the High Museum Gift Shop at Perimeter Mall or by calling (404) 733-5000.

The baritone section of Sounds of Blackness
Photography : Everard Williams

Perhaps one of the most celebrated gospel choirs in the industry today are The Sounds of Blackness. Their uniquely electrifying performance along with the Blind Boys of Alabama will be featured on May 14, at the three day Midtown Atlanta Music Festival.

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PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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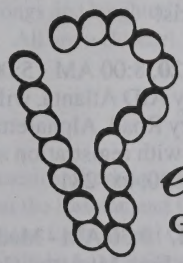

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MAY

Thursday, May 4, 7:30 PM—Charis Bookstore — Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege - Kent Leslie, professor of women's studies at Oglethorpe University brings us the fascinating life story of Amanda Dickson, an elite woman of color who lived within the social and economic systems of slavery and quasi-freedom in nineteenth-century Georgia.

Wednesday, May 10, 6:00 PM — Greater Atlanta Business Coalition (gabc) presents Marketing expert Alfred J. Nucifera. Colony Square Hotel.

Friday, May 12, 12 noon-2:00 PM — Truth Bookstore — Gwynelle, author of Affirmations For A Year Round Kwanzaa, will sign copies of her new book, African Alkhemy: Spiritual & Soul Transformation In America. Gwynelle uses essays and poems to illustrate how Afrikan ideas and values play a critical role in the transformation of consciousness currently happening in the global society.

Tuesday, May 16, 12 noon - 2:00 PM — Truth Bookstore — A. J. Verdelle, author of The Good Negress. Young Denise Palms, moves from her grandmother's rural home to join her mother & brothers in Detroit. Her new teacher encourages her to "reach beyond her station" in life by learning to speak the "King's English" and become "a good Negress."

Thursday, May 18, 7:30 PM — National Feminist Bookstore Week — Come celebrate with Charis!

Saturday, May 20, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM — AIDS 101 Awareness and Action Seminar, sponsored by AID Atlanta, will be held at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church, 9820 Nesbit Ferry Road, Alpharetta, GA. The AIDS 101 Seminar is an all day workshop, beginning with registration at 8:00 AM. Cost - $15.00. For more information, call (404) 885-6800, ext 281.

Sunday, May 21, 10:30 AM - Meditation Service, 11:00 AM - Service, Give Life A Dance — Home Free Ministry, Celebrations of Spirit at Nirvana

Sunday, May 21, 7:30 PM — Outwrite Bookstrore and Coffeehouse is proud to announce the visit of first-time novelist Darieck Scott. He will be signing and reading from his book Traitor to the Race.

Friday, May 26, 12 noon - 2:00 PM - Truth Bookstore — Valerie B. Shaw, author of Himpressions: The Blackwomen's Guide To Pampering The Blackman. In her controversial new book, Shaw suggests that today's Blackwoman has tried every tactic I the war between the sexes except the one that works. "We haven't tried being nice." A manual; designed to keep black love going strong, featuring 101 ways to pamper your man and 50 ways to say no to sex.

GALLERY OPENINGS

Michele Wood

At M Print Art & Fine Publishing, 253 Trinity St., Atlanta, Ga., Opening reception Friday May 6th 6 - 9, Showing from May 6 - May 28, 1995.

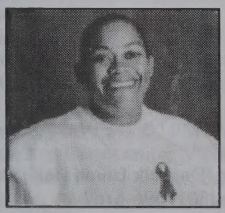
Freddie Styles

and his work will be presented at Camille Love Gallery, 320 E. Paces Ferry Rd. Opening reception Friday May 6, 6 - 9. Showing from May 6 - May 24, 1995.

Discovering Ellis Ruley

The works of Ellis Ruley will be presented at The High Museum of Art: Folk Art and Photography Galleries through July 22, 1995. Call (404) 522-6940

ANNOUNCEMENTS



I Remember Venus... friends of Venus Landin will meet at Kalo's Coffeehouse to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open mic, poetry, songs and laughter!!! Wednesday May 17, 1995, 7:30 P.M. All are welcome!

What are you doing about Pride this year?
On Sunday, May 7, 1995 at 4:00 PM the African-American Lesbian and Gay Alliance (A.A.L.G.A.) is hosting an informal discussion about the Lesbian and Gay Pride Weekend and other topics of interest to the African American Lesbian and Gay community. Light refreshments will be available. The gathering will be held at Our Cousins House, 1023 Dill Ave., Atlanta. Please call A.A.L.G.A. at 908-7371 for details.

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NATIONAL EVENTS

MAY

Atlanta
Friday, May 5-7, - Ballethnic Dance Company performs "The Leopard Tale" Atlanta Civic Center. For tickets call (404) 762-1416, (404) 817-8700

Baltimore
Saturday, May 6, 5:00 PM - 12 Midnight — Simplicity Attraction's Annual Help Them Benefit — Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins Street, Baltimore MD. Entertainment, dancing, BYOL, munchies, free set-ups. Attire: casual. Tickets $15.

Atlanta
Wednesday, May 17, 7:30 PM - "I Remember Venus..." friends of Venus Landin meet at Kalo's Coffeehouse, 1248 Clairmont Rd., Decatur to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open mic, readings and songs. Come share your memories. (404) 325-3733

Thursday, May 18, at 7:00 PM — Meet "Triple Threat NCAC Artist" Danny Tisdale at a book signing at Nexus Press. Tisdale's book will be available in the Performance Cafe.

Friday, May 19, 10:00 PM, Saturday, May 20, 8:00 PM, & Sunday May 21, 8:00 PM — Nexus Performance Presents - Danny: The Last African-American in the 22nd Century, A performance work complementing Tisdale's Nexus Press publication of the same title. Also, Cedric Maurice, Come Unity - Atlanta-based performance artist, choreographer and dancer debuts a movement theater work in the Performance Cafe. Come Unity explores the effects of social exploitation on African, Native American and Euro-American tribalships. The work is performed by a multi-ethnic ensemble of seven.

Saturday, May 20, 3:00 PM — ACT UP/Atlanta & Etcetera Magazine— Fluff your wigs; Wigwood '95 , The Metro, The Video Bar. 4th annual festival of Peace, Love, and Wigs will feature drag performances, variety acts, and music.

Baltimore
Saturday, May 20, 9PM - 2AM - Cricket and Beverly's White Affair. Dundalk Union Hall. Dancing, buffet, free beer & wine, BYOL. Tickets $20.00. Bobby Moore (301) 596-6167

D.C.
Friday, May 26, 10:00 PM — Black Pride Kick-Off Party — The Edge, 56 L Street SE, Washington DC. $10 before Midnight, $12 after Midnight.
Friday, May 26, 8:00 PM - 4:00 AM — The Anniversary Ball — Tracks, Under the BIG TOP, 1111 First Street SE, Washington DC. $25 At the door.

Friday, May 26, 10PM - 3AM - Woo-Baby & Carter Associates' Weekend Wet Party. Days Inn, 2700 N.Y. Ave., N.E. Bikini fashion show, mini-show, exotic dancers, cash bar, lavish buffet, dancing. $12.00 adv., $15.00 at door.

Atlanta
Saturday, May 27, 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM — West End Performing Arts Center, 945 Ralph D. Abernathy Blvd. SW, Atlanta (404) 752-7100 — Sisters of 30 Something Special presents The Personals. Tickets available from April 15 - May 15 ONLY! Advance Tickets $12, $15 at the door.

Saturday, May 27, Sisters of 30-Something Special presents Comfort Zone Productions, a NYC theatre troupe, in "The Personals". 2 shows; 4PM matinee, 8 PM evening. West End Performing Arts Center. $12.00 adv. / $15.00 door. Call (404) 804-8381.

Atlanta
Saturday, May 27, 10:00 PM - Hospitality Atlanta presents its annual Holiday Weekend Bash at Castlegate Hotel, call the H.A. Hotline (404) 708-6866
L.A.
Saturday, May 27, At the Beach... ATB presents its National Kickoff Celebration! Watch for details! (213) 969-1619

D.C.
Saturday, May 27, 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM — The Women's Weekend — Sophisticated Ladies presents Meet and Greet At The Edge, #56 L Street SE, Washington DC, 202-488-1200. Featuring Female Erotic Dancers and Art Exhibits. $6 cover.

Saturday, May 27, 9:00 PM - 4:00 AM — The Women's Weekend — Sophisticated Ladies in conjunction with Friends for Friends presents The Circle Underground, 1629 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC, 202-462-5575. Dancing until the morning hours! $10 cover.

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 AM — Prayer Breakfast — The Embassy Row Hotel, 2015 Massachusetts Avenue NW. FREE

Sunday May 28, 12 Noon - 8:00 PM — The Main Event — Black Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Outdoor Festival, Banneker Field, Georgia Avenue & Barry Place NW, Across from Howard University, Washington DC. Admission $5.

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 PM - 4:00 AM - The Women's Weekend — Sophisticated Ladies After Pride Party at Planet Fred, 1221 Connecticut Ave NW between M & N, Washington DC, 202-788-1866. Female Erotic Dancers, Free Caribbean Buffet! $10 cover.

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 PM - 3:00 AM - Marcking Productions Black Gay Pride Celebration. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St. S.E. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar, $5:00.

Atlanta
Sunday, May 28, 11:00 AM - dusk - Hospitality Atlanta returns to Red Top Mountain for the 4th annual Memorial Day Picnic Celebration on beautiful Lake Alatoona; one hour north of the city. Music, dancing, fun and frolic. Vendors call (404) 627-1630

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 PM - Venus Magazine presents the first Annual Memorial Day Salute to the Black Arts Community. V's on Peachtree, 320 Peachtree St. Festive attire. Meet and greet some of our nation's finest! Music, dancing, buffet. $10.00. The following tickets / stubs / 2-for-1! Jelly's Last Jam, Sophisticated Ladies, The Personals, The Dance Theatre of Harlem, Talking Bones, Mississippi Delta, Blues For an Alabama Sky, Raisin, A Lady and a Woman, and Servant of the People, and others!

Sunday, May 28, WOMANWRITES '95: 17th annual conference for lesbian writers. May 28th - June 4th. One hour south of Atlanta. Workshops, readings, meals, dormitory sleeping, lake. $70.00 - $100.00. Send SASE by May 15th! Silver Circle, Rt. 5, Box 100, Holly Springs, MS 38635 or contact Maree at (502) 966-2420

JUNE

Atlanta
Thursday, June 8-11, - "AFROGAL" present the first Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of Gays and Lesbians. Clarion Hotel. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

N.Y.
Thursday, June 8-11, - Simplicity Attractions of NY presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS. Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swimsuit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701

OUT & ABOUT

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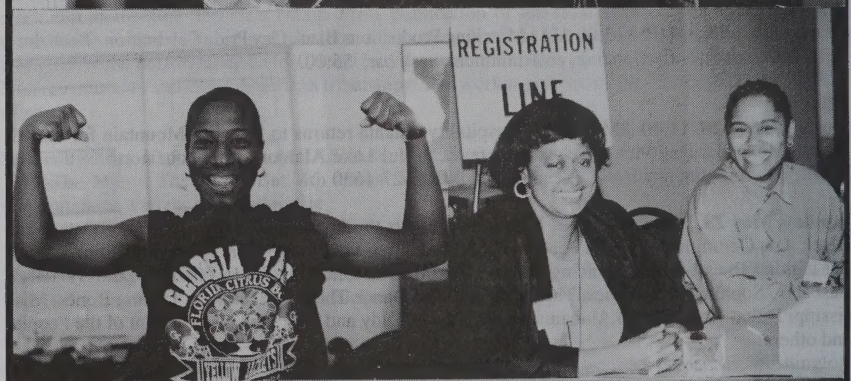
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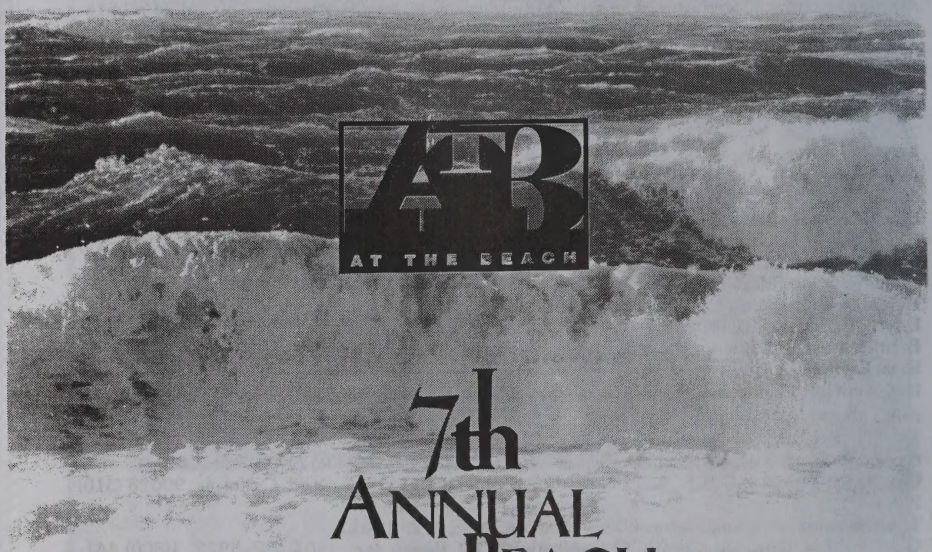
For Lesbia

ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
Asians and Friends/Atl., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Different Gyrl Production, PO Box 13346, Atlanta, GA 30324 (404) 908-5340
gabc - greater atlanta business coalition, 2103 N. Decatur Road, Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033 Phone (404) 377-4258 Fax (404) 37708500
Gay & Out Productions, PO Box 111, Clarkston, GA 30021-0111 Phone (404) 299-7809 Fax (404) 508-8697
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, Youth support group; P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743 Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Project Open Hand Atlanta, (404) 525-4620, Home delivered meals for people with AIDS related illness
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Silver Fingers Prod., (404)388-4624
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Sophisticated Ladies, Lesbian Social Group for Mature Women of Color (202) 788-1866
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, (404) 370-1392



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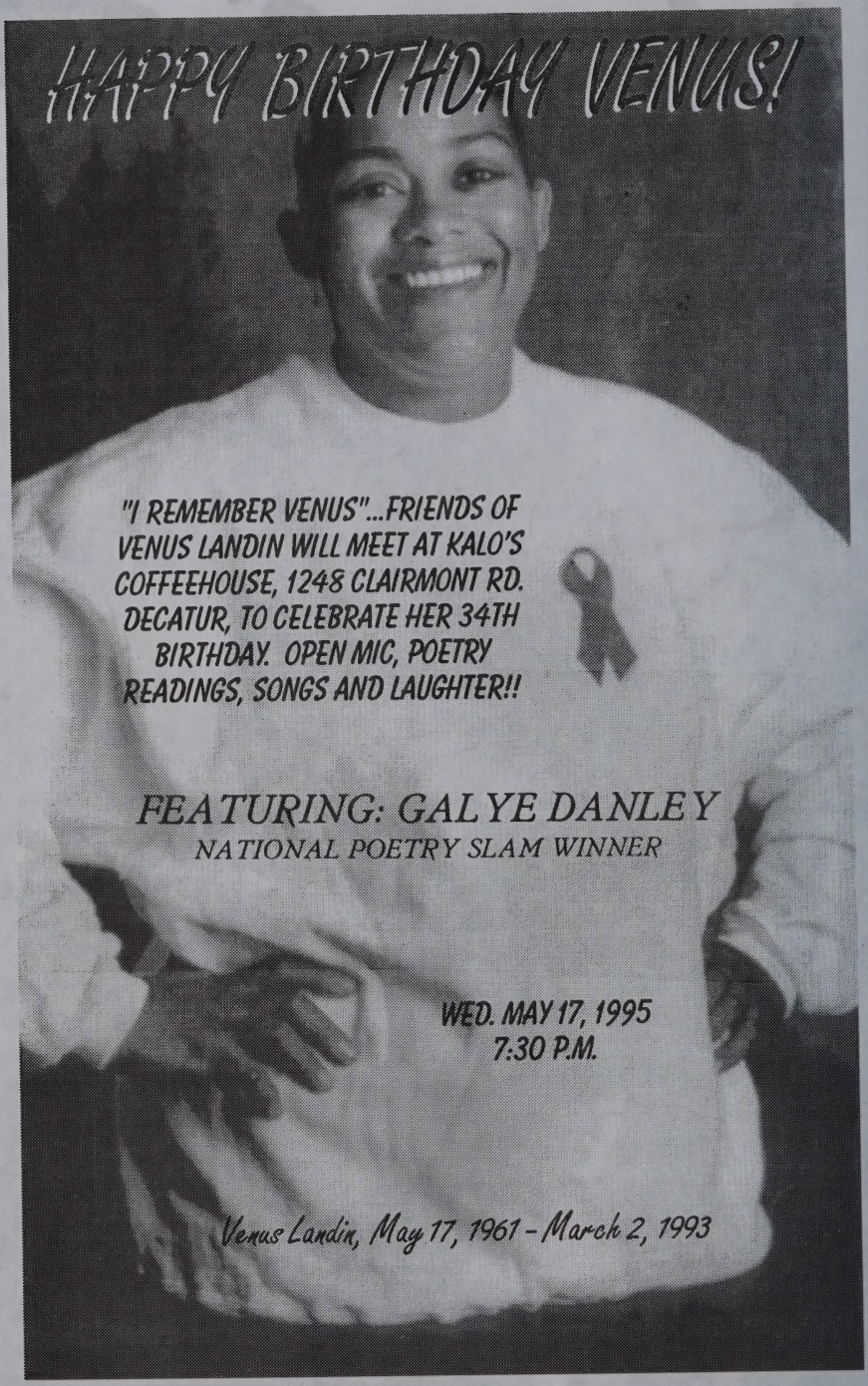
HAPPY BIRTHDAY VENUS!
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NATIONAL POETRY SLAM WINNER
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Barnes & Noble
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Tasty Graphics
Sevananda
Warehouse (Traxx)
Aids Education Service
Sister Love, Inc.
Loretta's
Outwrite Bookstore
Poster Hut
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Pearl Garden
Time To Travel
Rag Top Salon
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Velvet

STUDENT CENTERS:
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Clark AU
Dekalb College
Emory U.

STONE MT.
Walmart Plaza
K-Mart Plaza
Wayfield Center
Milano Pizza

MARIETTA
Minks Package Store
Smyrna Library
Starship Enterprises
Irie Cafe
Players bar
This, That & the Other

DECATUR
Dekalb College
Emory Student Center
Kalo's Coffee House
Chapter 11 Books

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The Catch
BGLLF Office
AIDS Project L.A.

WASHINGTON, D.C.
The Brass Rail
Traxx
Black Gay Pride, Inc.
Sophisticated Ladies
Events
Simplicity Attractions

BALTIMORE
Simplicity Attractions
Events

BROOKLYN
4 Seasons
Events

NEW YORK CITY
The Gay & Lesbian
Center
Simplicity Attractions
Events

PHILADELPHIA
Giavonni's Room

Jacob Lawrence
The Migration Series

Happy Memorial Day Weekend!

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Venus™

May 1995
Vol. 1 No. 5

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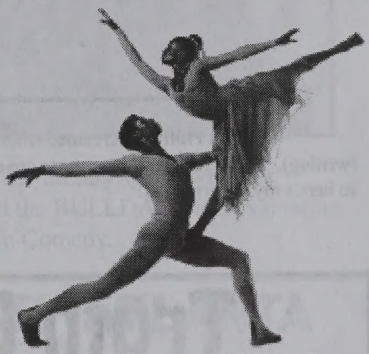

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LETTERS

Dear Venus Magazine!

I would like to comment on your story of "A Gentle and Fiercely determined Hero, Mr. Tre` Johnson." So many of our young brothers and sisters are their backs on P.W.A.'s. when such a courageous young man such as Tre` chose to face the issue head on, winning the battle.

Being a Northside Alumni myself, his story hit home, touching my heart, touching deeply. How could such a young and talented man at age 19 become HIV positive? This just goes to show that our youth need to be better educated on AIDS and I think young men like Tre` should continue to reach out to people to say that even in the eye of pain life can go on and you can enrich others' lives by being strong, through public speaking, writing and having the general knowledge that by being healthy in the mind can make you healthy bodywise and prolong your life.

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JoJo
Age:
"Timeless"
Status:
"Ready"
Career:
Lifetime Go-Get-Her
LastBook Read:
DARE TO BE YOURSELF
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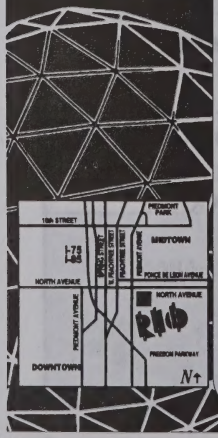

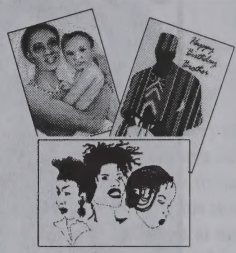

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People on the Move:

Jacob Lawrence

The Migration Series

by Jacqueline Frances

This month the High Museum of Art exhibits THE MIGRATION, a series of 60 paintings by the African-American artist, Jacob Lawrence. Painted in 1940-41, the series depicts a mass movement in which millions of southern black people moved North in search of employment and greater opportunities. The scenes depict the poor living conditions in the rural South, the migrants at teeming train stations and their journeys, and the "big city" life - for all its advantages and drawbacks - that they came to know.

Lawrence was born in 1917 in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the son of southern migrants on their way north. His parents separated in 1924, and after spending some time in Pennsylvania, his mother moved him and his siblings to Harlem in 1930. There, Lawrence studied art in children's programs and the Harlem Art Workshop, mingling with other African-American cultural elite, including the writers Langston Hughes and Claude McKay and the artists Charles Alston and Augusta Savage. Lawrence also worked for the Federal Arts Project, a Depression era government program that paid artists to make murals in the Harlem community, and earned a scholarship to the American Artists School, a "downtown" Manhattan institution.

Lawrence started painting seriously in 1937. His first subject was Toussaint L'Ouvertre, the Haitian patriot and leader of the nineteenth-century rebellion against French Colonial rule. Sub-

sequently, he completed narrative series on the lives of Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas. History, he found, could not be contained in a single image, a single painting.

With THE MIGRATION, Lawrence lifted the story of ordinary people like his parents to a lofty plane of significance. Lawrence says during an earlier interview, "It was inevitable that I would be doing this subject." The intellectual Alain Locke brought the series,

then called THE MIGRATION OF THE NEGRO, to the attention of a Manhattan art gallery owner, Edith Halpert. In turn, she arranged for several panels of THE MIGRATION to be reproduced in the November, 1941 issue of Fortune Magazine. After the series was exhibited at her gallery and several national venues, Halpert brokered its sale to the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Modern Art. These museums share the series equally with each institution buying 30 paintings.

THE MIGRATION exemplifies Jacob Lawrence's modern style. It is a uniformly designed composition in which colors and shapes seem to fit together like puzzle pieces. Each scene is painted in bold colors, and human figures and ordinary objets are abstracted, distorted, and generally simplified into geometric forms. To succinctly narrate his subject of people on the move, Lawrence painted the mere essence of things. As a result, THE MIGRATION has a readable immediacy; staccato, migratory movement is expressed in the images themselves.

Each panel is accompanied by sentence-long caption, which have been adapted for the contemporary audience of the nineties. Growing up, Lawrence was influenced by the church sermons and the lectures of Harlem's street orators and lay historians. His text, strengthened by the power of the word, accentuates the rhythms of his colorful images. The series ends where it begins; panel number sixty of migrants crowded at a southern train station and the caption reads, "And the migrants kept coming."

Lawrence, who lives in Seattle, Washington with his wife, Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence, who is also a well known painter. THE MIGRATION will be the subject of public lectures. Go see the work of an African-American master artist.

"Jacob Lawrence - The Migration Series," at the High Museum of Art, now through June 27, 1995. The High Museum is located at 1280 Peachtree street N.E. Atlanta, Georgia.
Museum Hours: Tues.-Sat, 10AM-5PM, Fri. open until 9PM, Sun. Noon-5PM. Admission for Adults is $6, students and senior citizens $5. Admission free on Thurs. 1-5PM. Phone (404) 733-4444.

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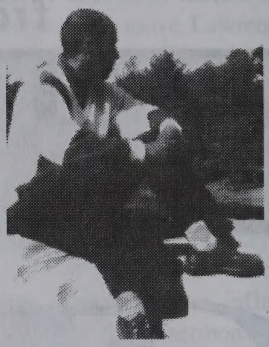


Teaching the idea of learning to LOVE one's self has been the intention of this column through the first four issues of the magazine. I have intentionally wanted to stay away from discussing specific "religious" ideology because, in my own opinion, it has been used to support and perpetuate the extreme feelings of "self hatred" that is found in the gay/lesbian community. I wanted us to have an opportunity to realign the connection to our true-Spiritual selves before we looked at how religion has utilized its teachings in an attempt to destroy that connection. It is now my desire to give you some insight as to how we can utilize our religious beliefs more appropriately. Let's begin by defining Spirituality as the expression of the Infinite. Religion is our belief about the Infinite and the practice of these beliefs. Spirituality is Love without condition and religion is Love as long as... .

Living in America in 1995, we live in a culture where Judeo-Christian beliefs and rules are used to set the standards for how we are to live. Therefore it is important for us to understand where these beliefs and rules come from (their history). We have been taught a Judeo-Christian religion where one source of information was law, the bible. A book that is a compilation of writings over a 4000 year period. Over the next 2000 years it has been rewritten and interpreted through many languages and cultures for many reasons. It is a compilation of stories that were originally written to tell the history of the Jewish people. In other words, its probably one of the best "history books" ever published. It was never meant to be used as a replacement for directly connecting with Spirit. It was never meant to be taken literally.

It is a book of Jewish customs, psychology, idioms and folklore. Over 40% of it is an account of dreams and visions. The laws that are written in the bible were intended for a tribe of people who felt that they were God's chosen people. It was a tribe of African descendants who were constantly being invaded and scattered throughout the land. Therefore, their major concern became one of continuing the race. These laws were not written for anyone not born into this tribe. It wasn't until after the death of Jesus, (a man who felt that his mission was to reform his people, the Jews, and not start a new religion), that these laws were given to other people.

We are constantly told, by Chris-

tians, that homosexuality is an abomination and all homosexuals are damned to hell. When one studies the book of Laviticus what we find is that any behavior which was considered a threat to the race was abomination. Looking upon anyone's nakedness, outside yourself or your spouse, (including your mother, father, sister, brother etc.), was an abomination. Entering into the temple unclean, (uncircumcised or on a menstrual cycle), was an abomination.

It was believed that the male planted the new baby into the woman and her only involvement in the birth process was to incubate the new life. Therefore, ejaculation should only take place within the vagina of a woman or a baby would be lost. And these are only a few examples. It is important to note that these laws were important to an ancient Middle Eastern culture thousands of years ago. In 1995 America, our laws change every time the wind blows. Yet we have not yet been able to shake the fears of the ancient Jews. Have we not yet evolved from the fears of our ancient ancestors?

The biblical writers never wrote anything of loving relationships or gender orientation as we know them to be today. So we don't really know how they felt about what we call homosexuality. Only that they were afraid of genocide. When the man Jesus came along he began to teach the idea of unconditional love to his tribe. He felt that to judge or condemn anyone was the true abomination.

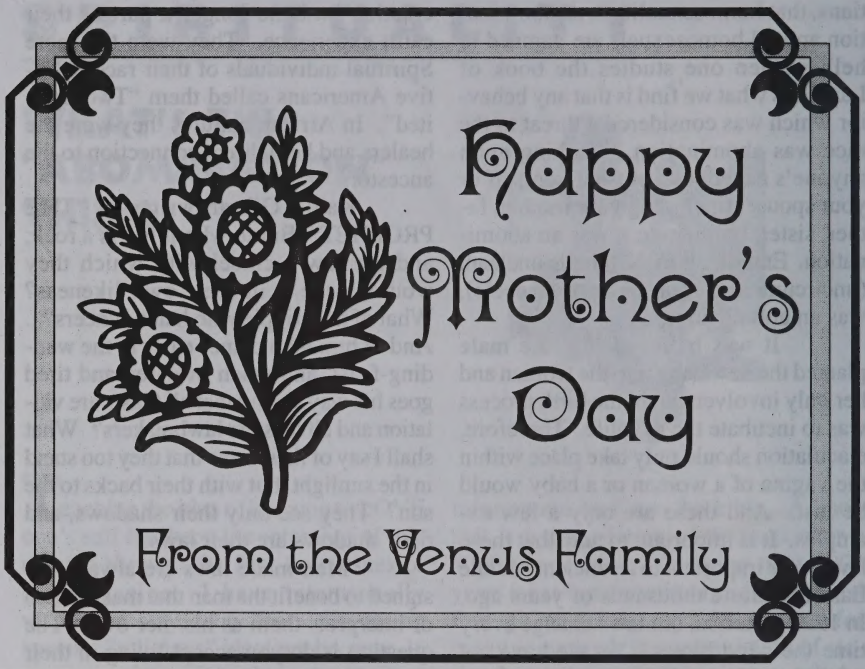
The idea of unconditional love was not new to the world. It was taught in many other cultures prior to the birth of the man Jesus. It is known that Jesus traveled and studied in many of these cultures (in Africa, Asia and Europe) where he developed many of his beliefs. Many of these so called indigenous cultures revered those of "same gender orientation". Homosexuals were seen as being more evolved than others and "procreation" was no longer a part of their earth experience. They were the more Spiritual individuals of their races. Native Americans called them "Two Spirited". In African cultures they were the healers and held direct connection to the ancestors.

Kahlil Gibran writes in "THE PROPHET", But to whom life is a rock, and the law a chisel with which they would carve it in their own likeness? What of the cripple who hates dancers?... And of him who comes early to the wedding-feast, and when over-fed and tired goes his way saying that all feasts are violation and all feasters lawbreakers? What shall I say of these save that they too stand in the sunlight, but with their backs to the sun? They see only their shadows, and their shadows are their laws.

Man made laws are always designed to benefit the man that makes them or interprets them as his/ her own. The question is do you accept living in their shadow, under their laws. Or do you do you study and interpret the laws finding the truth that celebrates you. I have learned that it is not important to judge others by the laws they create and interpret for themselves. I only judge the laws that I interpret as my own.

Let's agree that it is time to evolve from the fears and beliefs of the ancient ones. Kamau's Law: I AM NOT AN ABOMINATION. I AM HIGHLY EVOLVED. I AM SPIRIT EXPRESSING AS A HOMOSEXUAL. I AM UNCONDITIONAL LOVE.

Kamau Ifoma is a free lance writer and founder of Home Free Ministry



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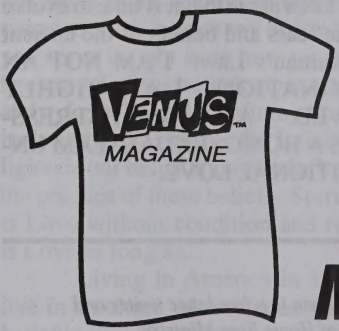

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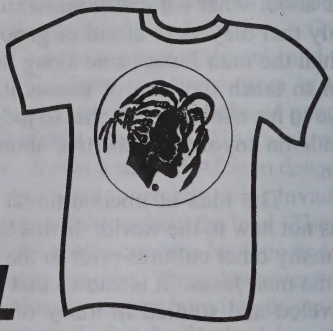

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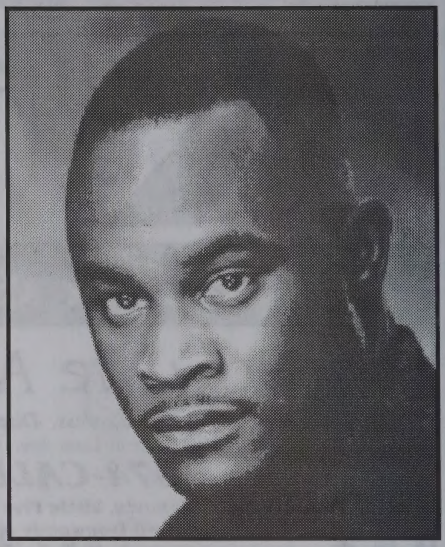
Name:
Sabastian T. Summers
Age:
25
Career:
Masters student at Clark Atlanta University, Criminal Justice Major
Last Book Read:
THE MISEDUCATION OF THE NEGRO
By Carter G. Woodson
Status:
Single
Hometown:
Orangeburg, S.C.



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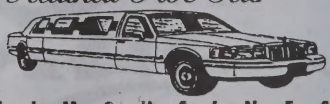

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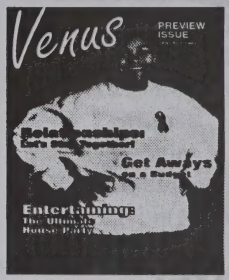

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MISS SIPPIE

A Cotsville Story

by Shirlene Holmes

It was a sunny morning in Cotsville. Sippie was sitting, spitting and burning hair on the front porch of her old white weather-beaten house. The tobacco was bitter and good this morning as she sprayed her brown juice on the grass. She had just cleaned her hair from the comb and was setting it afire. The smoke from her burning curls slightly choked her, but she cooked it, still fearing that if she throwed it away, someone might get a hold of it and rule her spirit.

So happen, she looked up.

"Good Lord and a quarter!" Miss Sippie howled looking over her porch railing as Missionary Porter come passing by, softly humming a song of Zion.

"You looking like new money, Missionary P."

"How you doing, Miss Sippie?"

"I'm here by being careful. How you?"

"I'm just leanin' and dependin' on Him."

"Now I done told you Missionary, that you can lean and depend on me whenever you want."

"Don't get started, Miss Sippie."

"I been started; you got to come on and let me finish."

"You have a good day, now. Jesus loves you."

"I ain't worried 'bout Jesus. When you gonna love me?"

"I'll be praying for ya, Miss Sippie."

Sippie was so carried away with Missionary, even the rejection tickled her so sweet. She just grinned and spit some more. Missionary carried on down the road over to the post office to get her money order as if their little conversation hadn't even raised her blood pressure. But truth is, it did. It sure did. Every time she saw Miss Sippie, Missionary would have to regulate her mind.

See, the two of them been at this cat and mouse thing for a long, long time. Miss Sippie Lee moved to Cotsville about 25 years ago when she got run out of Chicago for killing Virginia Beach's husband, CeDell. Back then, you only got a year and a day when you killed a nigga, which is what CeDell was. At least to Sippie. She would have done the time, but her best friend, Iola, got her a ticket and she left the city for Cotsville 'for the cops could catch her or take her name.' She wouldn't have killed CeDell if he hadn't put Virginia in the hospital that last time. He had done it before, but this time... this time Virginia lost her blood and her life.

When they first met, Sippie was trying to be respectful, knowing the gal had a husband, but Virginia was writing checks so big, Sippie just had to cash 'em. Hell, you would too, the way Virginia was. She was one of them see line women: empty you pockets, wreck your days, make you love her, then shoo fly away...

Virginia was married Monday

through Friday, but when Friday night roll around, she spent the weekend in Sippie's lap. And you would've, too.

Sippie was 'bout 26 inches in the waist then and wore her cummerbund real tight to match her bow tie. Her hair was red as fire, laid with waves like an ocean, baby. And she had a full gold tooth in the front of her mouth. Her skin was high yellow like lemon pound cake, sweet.

Make you want to bite and eat it. That's what all the gals say. In them days, when she put her rags on, 24 hours wouldn't go by without somebody stopping her in the streets, thinkin she was a famous singer or something.

Sippie's fingers are gnarled with arthritis now, but back then, she was known for the diamond rocks she sported on her pinkies and her gold watch. She had hands tough enough to fix car engines, but tender enough to rub the gals the right way. And she rubbed 'em, too, till they hollered for help.

CeDell knew all about Virginia and Sippie. They had been carrying on 'bout a year when he found out. He though he'd get his wife back, but Sippie messed up and fell in love with Virginia. Usually, she was stronger than that. When it come to gals, she just picked them up, danced them around and put them back down. Sippie always say, "Just don't let them gals look you straight in the eye. If they get you eyes, they get your heart."

Oh, but Virginia had them cat eyes. Gray-like and switch to green or water blue, 'pending on how she feel or what she had on. Mary people thought she was a devil chile because of them eyes. Sippie wasn't scared of them eyes or the devil and eased up on Virginia one of them Friday nights when she was out catting around.

She wasn't gonna get in no trouble, Sippie knew better.

But you know, they was up in the bed in Sippie's room. Sippie had just put her cigar out and was nursing on Virginia's breast when the softness got to her and she looked up at that gal's face. Right in them eyes.

Goddamn.

Sippie wasn't no more good from that day on. When Virginia say, "Jump!" Sippie just ask, "Baby, How high? How high?"

Virginia halfway act like she loved Sippie. Put her black dress on and trapped herself between Sippie's strong legs and made that gold toothed woman so happy. Miss Sippie woulda slapped her momma if Virginia just say she wanted her to.

Sippie was dropping weight fast then. Couldn't eat nothing but Virginia. Couldn't smell nothing but her scent. Loss her mind every time Sunday night come and Virginia would have to go back home. She was in a state.

Sippie's best friend, Iola say, while they was at work fixing cars, "She got you bad, Sippie. You don't know a wrench from a screw. You better go see that soothsayer and get that spell offa you."

Sippie kept on denying it till this Sunday night when CeDell went foolish. He was drinking that Vodka and it told him to come cussing up to Sippie's room. She stomped a mud hole in his ass that night. Sippie don' like to fight, it messes up her good clothes, but she will if she has to. And that night, she had to. CeDell got to calling her a "Big BULLDAGGER!" in the street. But she was more man than him.

Sippie warned him saying, "go on home, CeDell, you ain't got enough be-

hind to take the whopping I'll put on you."

Well you know, Vodka make you stupid, so CeDell kept on, just running off at the mouth 'bout how wasn't no bitch woman gonna play him for a fool. He was talking that trash till Sippie couldn't take it no more and hit him like a hammer in the mouth. Blood was running everywhere. She cut him so hard, took a plug of meat outta his bottom lip. CeDell come to himself and hauled of and hit Sippie in her face, breaking vessels all up and down her head. She took off her rings and watch then, and beat that man so bad even she felt sorry for him. Matter fact, folks in Chicago still say Sippie put something on him even the good Lord couldn't take off.

CeDell got up from the ground that Sunday night and put a butcher knife in the center of Virginia's breasts. And that gal sho nuff died by morning. Everybody say he died, but Sippie don't know for sure; she had to leave town before the next day broke.

Iola come running to Sippie's door that very same night, banging, "SIPPIE, SIPPIE!!! CeDell done killed Virginia! Shit, girl, what you gonna do?" Sippie's blood stop running, cold. She got her gun from under the pillow. She couldn't find CeDell at first, but she caught him coming up out of Ressie's bar and Grill. He was hung over about to vomit in the street.

"CeDell, you a walking dead man", Sippie hollered. "Say your prayers."

Everybody cleared the street.

CeDell puked.

"I didn't mean to hurt her," he say.

"CeDell, you killed my baby; I'm a have to kill you."

"She my wife."

"I let you have her through the week, You know she mine."

"I had the papers on her."

"I don't care what you had, you got me now."

And Sippie shot him. Sho did. And he fell over dead. She went to the hospital kissed Virginia's lips good-bye saying, "Go on to Glory, baby; I took care of everything."

I wouldn't lie, that very night Sippie got on the Amtrak and made it to Cotsville. When the sun came up that next day, she was sitting at her great aunt Mattie's kitchen table eating hot water cornbread, scrambled eggs and scrapple. Great aunt Mattie died that next June and Sippie been owning that old white weathered house ever since.

She ain't never hear tell of what happened to Virginia in the end. She know they buried CeDell in potter's field, but what happen to her gray-eyed baby, she don't know to this day. She sit on that porch whining a blues tune sometimes, hoping that cat-eyed gal would just come by and soothe her. It ain't happen yet.

Sippie toothless now and her hair ain't red no more, but the fire ain't no where out. And you know, wasn't long after she got to Cotsville that she started burning for Missionary Porter. The flame was so hot and high, even Sippie had to sometimes pray.

She met Missionary Porter through Margaret who, when she was alive, tried her damnedest to save Sippie's soul. Margaret say, "Sippie don't you want to clean up your life.?" See everybody in Cotsville know she had killed a man. Cleveretta say, Sippie even showed her the gun she did it wit. Mother Martha was wondering what Cleveretta was doing up in that old weathered house with

Miss Sippie. "Young womens ain't got no business messing around old red-headed heifers with a history of sporting neck-ties and girls on their arms," Mother Martha was quick to announce. Didn't she know that curiosity killed the cat?

Cleveretta wasn't satisfied till she got up in Sippie's business. She run right over to Teresa's with a box of Argo starch and two RC colas up under her arm. She say, "Girl, she one of them. Just like Mary and Lou."

Teresa say, draining the juice off her Virginia ham, "I don't know how she do it; women all in the bed and everything. Makes me itch all over to think of it." Cleveretta say, "I don't know how she do it neither, but if she like it, I love it. I couldn't put my mouth on no woman," Teresa say, crunching down on some starch. "You think they put powder 'tween the sheets, like I do, to cool they skin off?" "No chile," replied Cleveretta, wiping her dusty mouth with the back of her hand; "Them gals like to burn."

Margaret gave up on Sippie's soul and visited her up until the very day she died in Missionary Porter's arms. Sippie respect Margaret, so she had to keep her distance. See, she found Missionary too good for her eyes, and couldn't trust herself. And everybody in Cotsville know that Missionary Porter didn't have a nickel in that dime. She wasn't straying away from Margaret no way, no how.

When Margaret died, Sippie went and paid her last respect. Missionary was close to catatonic. Martha swear Missionary Porter didn't even blink at the funeral. Cousin Mildred would swear on a stack of bibles that she saw Missionary cry. Gardenia and Magnolia, the Flowers' twin daughters, say it ain't true. Didn't nary a drop of water fall from Missionary's eyes.

Sippie know Missionary's heart is buried in that grave with Margaret, but the dog and the devil rises each time the sweet saint happens by.

Sippie snatched her another plug of tobacco, so glad she decided to finish her hair on the porch this morning. She rocked steady in her chair, feeling the creaks in her bones working their way out with each stroke. Along come Missionary again, her errand at the post office run.

"Ha' mercy! Missionary P; what you doing to me?"

"I'm leaving you alone."

"I'd get up and walk you home if you let me spend the night."

"Night's to long for that, Miss Sippie, but I 'preciate the thought. You take care of yourself. Don't you go nowhere, hear?"

"Don't you worry 'bout it. I'll wait here rocking."

"Seem like you need a new chair. I hear that one creaking clean over here."

"You need to come on up here and be my new chair, Missionary."

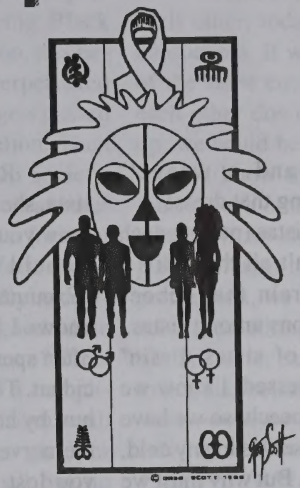
"I'm gonna pray your strength in the Lord, Miss Sippie. I got to go visit the sick and shut in. Bye, now."

Sippie watched Missionary slowly step on down the road. She grinned all over herself and rocked that old chair even harder and sang:

"You can rock me, baby.
You can rock me all night long.
You can rock me, baby Rock me.
You can rock me all night long.
You can rock me, baby; rock me till
My back ain't got no bone."

The thought of it kept Miss Sippie wet and sassy till way that afternoon when she got up to go inside to take her pressure pill.

The Magic is Coming



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SHE AIN'T ALL THAT

by JoJo

"Fake nails and a weave!" "NO!...she ain't wearing that dress!"

Sistas dissin' sistas (putting each other down). "She ain't all that." It's a painful common refrain that echoes throughout conversations among sistas.

The problem of sistas dissin' sistas needs to be addressed. I know we share the freedom of speech, so we have the right to express ourselves in any cold, callous way we choose. But why must we choose to use our words to undermine each other? By listening in silence we condone that the sista being attacked for not being "all that" is left powerless.

Remember the saying "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me?" We used to sing these words in elementary school. Words do hurt. They carry enormous power.

Can you imagine the effects of being told that you're not good enough? Too fat? Too Black? Too ugly? Such words are detrimental to a sista's self esteem. I have let sistas strip me of my power. Defining me with:

"You wear too much make-up,"

"Why you gotta be like that?"

"Your hair's too short."

I have made so many alterations that I almost gave up on me.

Recently when I was out with a sista, she said, "I'll be so glad when you grow your hair back." The only response I could muster was a high-pitched "Excuuuuse me, Girlfriend!" This sista knows I like my hair short, and we had often spent time together prior to this incident. That's why I was so shocked and hurt by her blunt disclosure. I wish I had the nerve to say, "I'd like you better if you lost thirty pounds." Instead, I restrained myself, as usual. And this was my home girl dissin' me to my face. Perhaps she didn't think what she said was a put down. I know girlfriend is entitled to her opinion, which she obviously felt compelled to share with me, disregarding the cost to my feelings. Part of the reason I now wear my hair short is because of the insults I suffered as a child being ridiculed for having long hair. But sistas still make a fuss over my hair.

"I like it better long."

"I like it better short."

Sistas, I'd like it better if you would get off my ass. Stop trying to fix my hair, because I ain't in search of a makeover. The key point here, sistas, is acceptance, which is synonymous with respect. Respecting another sista for herself, not what you think she should be doing to meet your standards.

As the late Audre Lorde said, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies of me, and eaten alive." These words have

become a part of my daily spiritual armor against the attacks of "She ain't all that."

Many of our ancestors were programmed to believe that being Black wasn't all that. For some reason, this belief has particularly been perpetuated among Black females, and it gets passed on from generation to generation. Then the daughter promenades into society, unleashing her vicious rage on another sista. We don't even recognize it for what it is. We have sat back in comfort, allowing these actions to be socially acceptable. How often have we laughed while hearing a sista being put down? How many times have we offered a compliment to a sista? We will affirm each other's esteem with, "You go girl," or "You really look nice today," but no sooner that girlfriend turns her back, the knife of, "I can't stand that bitch; she ain't all that" stabs her in cold blood.

The other night I was sitting in a night club with a couple of women. They put down every woman who entered the room. I finally clapped my hands together and said, "ENOUGH ALREADY!" And with that I left the "She ain't all that" party. They questioned each other with, "What's wrong with her?"

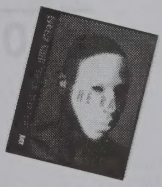
I once heard Ms. Maya Angelou say in an interview that she doesn't allow people to put others down in her presence. I thought to myself, "Way to go, Ms. Angelou! But did I implement the same practice in my own life? No.

To judge my sista is to judge myself. We are all mirror reflections of each other. What we didn't like in ourselves we project onto another sista. If we can't accept ourselves, we can't appreciate or even accept the difference among us. It says in the Bible that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. It's a two-pronged commandment, for we can't carry out the part about loving each other if we can't love ourselves.

Sista's we are all different from each other, today. I thank God for my uniqueness. If we could just exert some of the same energy we put into putting each other down into lifting each other up, we could be a much more powerful force. I know that if we learn to really look at each other, we will see things we admire. If we choose to compliment the positive rather than comment on the imperfections, we can begin to see in ourselves something worth celebrating. Our blackness, for example. Because contrary to popular belief, it is "all that."

JoJo lives in Philadelphia and is working on a novella.

MEET THE AUTHOR



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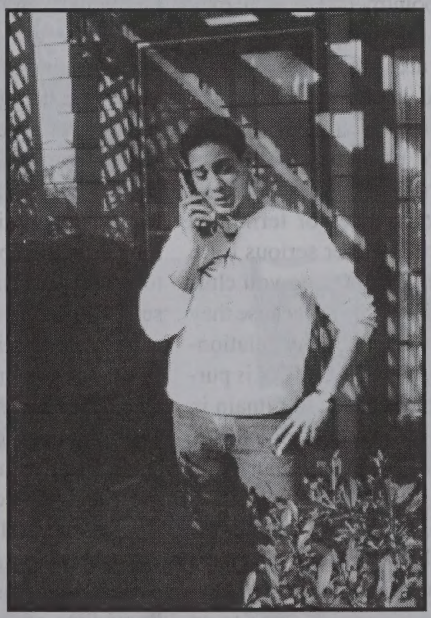
RELATIONSHIPS

WHEN IS IT TIME TO MOVE ON?

by Carla S. Anderson, MA

Often bad relationships become fodder for may a stand-up comedian. How many times have each of us had a friend approach us regarding whether they should give their relationship 'one more chance' or leave? Questioning the stability of a relationship is something that each of us has done at one time or another. So when should the red flag go up regarding unhealthy behavior in a relationship? Just what experiences qualify as 'I think it's time to move on' criteria?



One common relationship speed bump involves communication snafus. This can range from minor irritations and idiosyncrasies to verbal abusiveness and one partner or both not being heard. Some communication issues can be workable with the aid of self help materials such as books, audio and/or visual tapes or couples retreats. However, if your partner uses extreme condemnations, verbal abuse of attacks on your vulnerable areas, a more direct intervention of short or long term therapy should be considered. In some cases the relationship becomes safer for both partners and is salvageable.

Some couples find themselves trapped in a 'tit for tat' destruction of each others' personal or shared property. For example, you arrive home late and forget to call, and in retaliation, your lover destroys your favorite earrings. This is a situation where direct action should be demanded. You must acknowledge that this is a problem and obtain help. If you cannot agree to seek help, then the healthy choice would be to leave the relationship. On the other hand, if you both engage in a joint,(and the key word here is joint), effort to deal with this issue and eliminate this behavior, then you may choose to stay.

Be very clear about the difference between active and passive action. Active action means acknowledging the issues that arise and initiating the work in-

volved in addressing those issues, i.e., therapy or self-help materials, etc. On the other hand, passive action involves holding back or ignoring the issues that arise hoping things will change or get better.

If it becomes a part of your relationship to threaten physical violence or engage in it, then ACTIVE ACTION must be taken because your relationship is definitely unhealthy. Suppose the abuse has been acknowledged and you both agree to begin couples therapy, but every time an appointment is scheduled one of you has an excuse not to make it OR a year has gone by and neither of you has made the first appointment. Honey, it may be time to move on!

Another area of abuse which is often overlooked in the black gay and lesbian community is couples with children. If verbal or physical abuse is directed at your children by your partner, make immediate changes or terminate your relationship! Another serious form of abuse involves the damage you children may internalize simply because they are witness to your unhealthy relationship. Again, if ACTIVE ACTION is pursued, then you may choose to remain in the relationship. However, if no change is initiated and followed through with, then it is time to move on!

The final issue some find themselves confronting involves infidelity. You must first question how your relationship is being defined. If both partners agree to an open relationship, then engage in a heightened level of communication to keep each other informed of emotional changes that occur. Often couples are mistaken in their thinking that an open relationship requires less focus on the dyad. This is farthest from the truth! If you feel that you have been bullied into accepting your partner's affairs, TAKE ACTIVE ACTION! If you find yourself seeking others outside of the relationship to fulfill you emotional, sexual and spiritual needs, again, take active action. Open relationships, if mutually agreed upon, are possible. Infidelity, if acknowledged, does not have to lead to the destruction of the relationship. It is a much different case if one affair after another are swept under the rug! Resentment and the dissolution of basic trust signal 'DO Something!' or make preparations to leave.

The primary key involved in the decision to remain or move on is the issue of safety. If you are not feeling safe emotionally or physically, take immediate active action. If your emotional, sexual and spiritual needs are not being met or are being neglected, a wide range of intervention are available. For example, couples' workshops, scheduling time to discuss specific issues before they lead to an emotional explosion, short or long term therapy, finding joint activities to share, isolating time to pamper oneself or utilizing self help aids.

Intimate relationships, like other relationships, are great when they are great and a drag when things are not so great. These ups and downs are expected and should not result in making damaging sacrifices. However, if you find yourself asking 'should I stay?' more than enjoying the relationship with your partner overall, then this question deserves your immediate attention and ACTIVE ACTION!!

Carla Anderson is a psychotherapist practicing in Atlanta.

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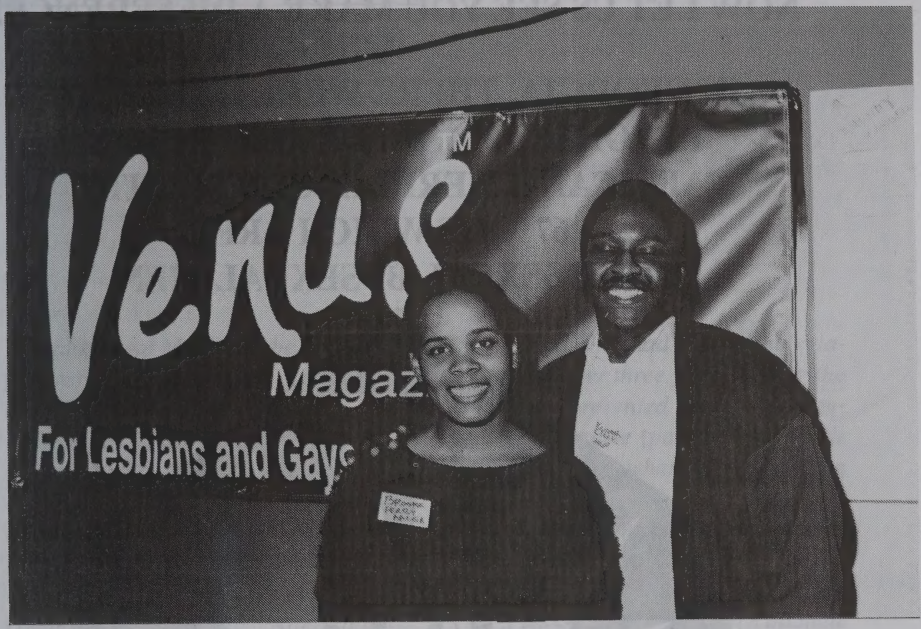
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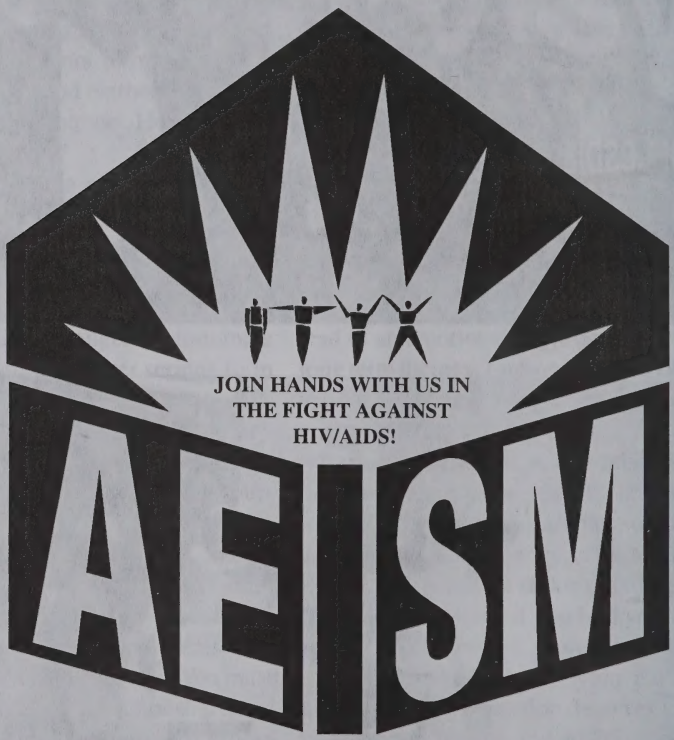

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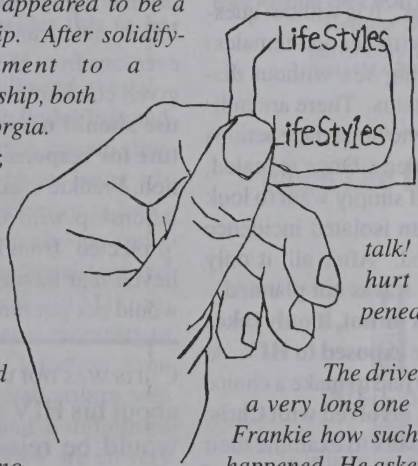
HEALTH

SEX, LIES AND HIV

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph.D.

Frankie and Max have been partners for over three years. Max, a 35 year old dental hygienist approached Frankie while at his best friend's birthday party in Washington, D.C. Frankie, a 33 year old civil engineer was pleased that Max initiated the introduction... Over time, both grew fond of each other and ultimately entered what appeared to be a committed relationship. After solidifying their commitment to a monogamous relationship, both moved to Atlanta, Georgia. Every year however, both would drive to Washington, D.C. to connect with old friends. Frankie would insist on staying with Chris, a former classmate and best friend.



At Chris' annual Memorial Day barbecue, Max could not help but mentally question the special way his partner and best friend made 'eyes' while standing very close to one another. Max tried to ignore what was happening internally, yet he sensed 'fowl play'. Later, he confronted Frankie and was made to feel guilty for not trusting him, after all, they had been in this relationship for over three years. When the opportunity presented itself, Max confront both Frankie (partner) and Chris (best friend) as to what was really going on. Total silent hit the air... No words were offered from either Frankie or Chris. Finally, Max asked if they had been intimate with one another. Again, the room was met with total silence. In a very low voice, Chris said, 'We need to talk! We did not mean to hurt you. It only happened once.'

The drive back to Atlanta was a very long one indeed. Max asked Frankie how such a thing could have happened. He asked Frankie did he and Chris use a condom? Again, Frankie was very quite. Max responded to the silence with the response, "I guess that means no one thought about protection?" Still no response from Frankie. This was too much for Max to handle given he had never shared with Frankie that Chris was HIV positive. Max never talked about

what his best friend Chris shared during their many private conversations regarding his HIV status. Now, Max would have to address the implications of Frankie's and Chris' sexual infidelity on his life..."

Frankie, Max and Chris do not represent an isolated case. Surely, you have experienced or heard of similar scenarios as the one depicted about -- Sex, Lies and HIV. Last month Venus addressed condoms -- its misuse, under-use and non-use. To capitalized on that foundation, Venus felt it necessary to revisit the topic once again. Max and Frankie were lovers for three years, however, as a result of situational variables (i.e., sensation seeking, being irresponsible, being unprepared, etc.), Frankie not only violated the integrity of the relationship, but introduced HIV as a major health concern to his partner. It is without question that individuals (males and females) are knowingly having sex without disclosing their HIV status. There are individuals like Chris who hope their actions will never be revealed. Once revealed, many like Chris will simply want to look at this scenario as an isolated incidence never to be repeated. After all, it only happened once and it was not planned.

Planned sex or not, it only takes one time to become exposed to HIV. At some point, Frankie had to make a choice to become sexually involved with Chris. Frankie has forced Max to examine their sexual history; question if this sort of thing has happened with others; wonder if Chris is really a best friend; feel embarrassed that others knew of Frankie's infidelity; consider HIV testing; and wonder if any one can be trusted to remain faithful in a relationship. Like many, Max hoped his relationship with Frankie would last a life time. So where does Max go from here?

First, it is very important to remember,

"HIV is alive in '95". Do not allow anyone to encourage you to participate in sex without the use of a condom.

This rule applies to those with prior history engaging in casual sex without using condoms and those who would like to maintain a monogamous relationship for a lifetime.

In this particular case, Frankie did not know Chris was HIV positive, but should have taken measures to ensure maximum protection. This does not justify having sex outside any partnership. It does not mean the condom will protect everyone from becoming exposed to HIV given condom breakage, etc. **Condom use should never be used as a substitute for responsible behavior.** In addition, Frankie used the security of his relationship with Chris to mean he was 'protected' from HIV. Frankie also believed that having sex with Chris once would not put him at risk.

Chris was not up front with Frankie about his HIV status in fear that he would be rejected and denied an opportunity to have sex. This type behavior is not uncommon.

Despite advances in HIV education, even a college trained dental hygienist (Frankie) and civil engineer (Chris) have not translated the prevention message

into everyday practice.

Remember this statement, "IT AIN'T WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE!" Repeat this statement to yourself when you are presented with easy opportunities to have sex with familiar faces. Many opportunities are presented to you in well-dressed, polished, soft-spoken, attractive, often muscular, well groomed and not so groomed, and what appears to be innocent and trustworthy individuals. There are many individuals like Chris, who have not taken the time to learn how to live (not die) with HIV -- being responsible for their actions. Should he take the time to do so, he would be less likely to lose a close friend like Max. Unfortunately, Chris' withholding his HIV status and knowingly having unprotected sex (regardless of his fear of rejection) could now bring his best friend into a similar experience they spent hours talking about. Would you consider this to be friendship? Certainly not.

Overall, Max will need to establish new boundaries with both Chris and Frankie. One thing is for certain, this matter should not go without being addressed. This type of behavior is inexcusable. There is absolutely no room for negotiation regarding consistent and proper condom use. Similar to Max, everyone must do whatever is necessary to reduce their risk of HIV infection, even if it means terminating relationships with unhealthy friendship and a unfaithful partner. Sex, Lies and HIV are all very serious subject matters that when combined could be costly. BE RESPONSIBLE, MAINTAIN INTEGRITY AND THE LIFE YOU SAVE MAY BE YOUR OWN.

Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph.D., is a health and behavior scientist

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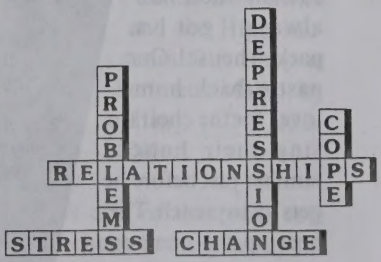

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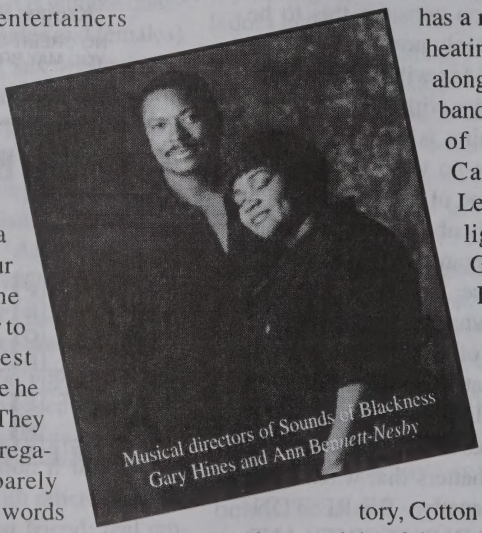
The Alliance Theatre And The Midtown Music Festival '95 Bring Gospel Music Center Stage

By Charlene Cothran

Many of us who grew up in the choir stands of the traditional black church have witnessed the evolution of gospel music. "I didn't come for no form or fashion or no outside show to the world," we'd testify but down in our souls, we knew we were entertainers extraordinaire! If we didn't know it, the preachers did!! Any pastor with a smokin' choir has always got a packed house! Our pastor back home loves for the choir to sing their hottest number just before he gets up to preach. They heat up the congregation so hot, he barely gets to say three words before the saints are dancing down the isles!



Musical directors of Sounds of Blackness Gary Hines and Ann Bennett-Nesby

The gospel music industry simply exploded in the mid 1980's. This inspiring form of 'entertainment' is now responsible for the sale of everything from orange juice and aluminum foil to airline tickets and motion pictures. One of gospel music's latest clients is the Alliance Theatre Company. Tom Key's "Cotton Patch Gospel" has a roof-raising choir heating up center stage along with a blue grass band and the narration of Atlanta's own Carol Mitchell-Leon. The set spotlights the work of Georgia folk artist Howard Finster who asks, "What if Jesus was born in Georgia?"

For the first time in its ten year history, Cotton Patch Gospel will feature eight of the most talented gospel singers in Atlanta—AMY BANKS, SHILLA BENNING, STUART FLEMISTER, MADISON RIVERS JACKSON, ERIC MOORE, WANDA

REESE, ALESIA SUBLETT AND DEMITRICE TYLER WILLIAMS.

Currently a student in theatre at Agnes Scott College, Amy Banks has performed with several jazz bands and ensemble, and local theatres including the Horizon Theatre and Onstage Atlanta.

Shilla Benning's musical theatre credits include, among other, HEARTSTRINGS national tour; a world tour of MAMA I WANT TO SING, and BUBBLIN' BROWN SUGAR.

Stuart J.L. Flemister has appeared as a choir member on the reunion episode of "The Cosby Show." Flemister is also a former member of the Morehouse College Glee Club and the Atlanta Boys Choir.

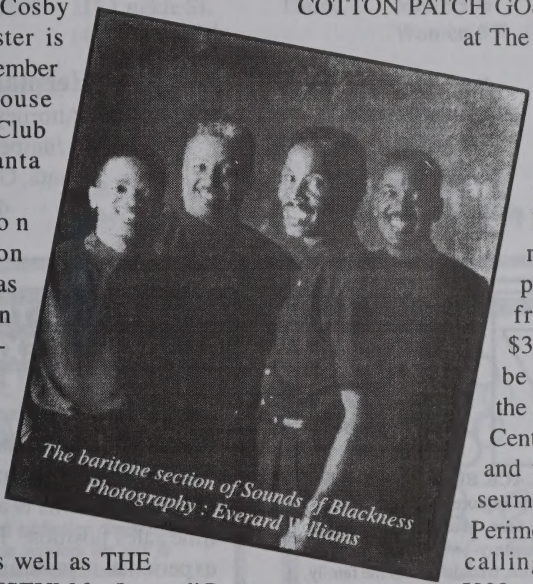
Maison Rivers Jackson has appeared as Hoke Colburn in the Springer Opera House production of DRIVING MISS DAISY and has also appeared in MACBETH, as well as THE COLORED MUSEUM for Jomandi Productions.

The brother/sister team of Wanda Reese and Eric Moore have a combined experience of 30 years in the areas of writing, singing, and directing both traditional and contemporary gospel music. Moore has record with Georgia's All-State Men's Chorus; is a Georgia State Minister of music; and has directed the Bethesda Temple Recording Choir for 15 years.

Alesia R. Sublett has appeared in NEW BLACK VOICES and as a soloist in James Weldon Johnson's GOD'S TROMBONES at Morris Brown College. Sublett can also be heard performing the theme song for Atlanta's Channel 2, Saturday Morning AM New Show.

Demetrice Tyler Williams has appeared in such productions as BUBBLIN' BROWN SUGAR, THE COLORED MUSEUM, MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM, and in Jomandi's DREAMGIRLS.

COTTON PATCH GOSPEL will run at The Alliance Theatre, May 6 - 28. A portion of every ticket will go to benefit Habitat for Humanity. Tickets prices range from $13 to $34.75 and may be purchased at the Woodruff Arts Center Box Office and the High Museum Gift Shop at Perimeter Mall or by calling (404) 733-5000.



The baritone section of Sounds of Blackness
Photography : Everard Williams

Perhaps one of the most celebrated gospel choirs in the industry today are The Sounds of Blackness. Their uniquely electrifying performance along with the Blind Boys of Alabama will be featured on May 14, at the three day Midtown Atlanta Music Festival.

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The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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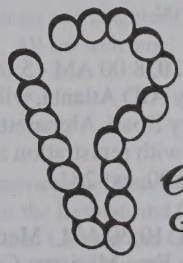

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MAY

Thursday, May 4, 7:30 PM—Charis Bookstore — Woman of Color, Daughter of Privilege - Kent Leslie, professor of women's studies at Oglethorpe University brings us the fascinating life story of Amanda Dickson, an elite woman of color who lived within the social and economic systems of slavery and quasi-freedom in nineteenth-century Georgia.

Wednesday, May 10, 6:00 PM — Greater Atlanta Business Coalition (gabc) presents Marketing expert Alfred J. Nucifera. Colony Square Hotel.

Friday, May 12, 12 noon-2:00 PM — Truth Bookstore — Gwynelle, author of Affirmations For A Year Round Kwanzaa, will sign copies of her new book, African Alkhemy: Spiritual & Soul Transformation In America. Gwynelle uses essays and poems to illustrate how Afrikan ideas and values play a critical role in the transformation of consciousness currently happening in the global society.

Tuesday, May 16, 12 noon - 2:00 PM — Truth Bookstore — A. J. Verdelle, author of The Good Negress. Young Denise Palms, moves from her grandmother's rural home to join her mother & brothers in Detroit. Her new teacher encourages her to "reach beyond her station" in life by learning to speak the "King's English" and become "a good Negress."

Thursday, May 18, 7:30 PM — National Feminist Bookstore Week — Come celebrate with Charis!

Saturday, May 20, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM — AIDS 101 Awareness and Action Seminar, sponsored by AID Atlanta, will be held at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church, 9820 Nesbit Ferry Road, Alpharetta, GA. The AIDS 101 Seminar is an all day workshop, beginning with registration at 8:00 AM. Cost - $15.00. For more information, call (404) 885-6800, ext 281.

Sunday, May 21, 10:30 AM - Meditation Service, 11:00 AM - Service, Give Life A Dance — Home Free Ministry, Celebrations of Spirit at Nirvana

Sunday, May 21, 7:30 PM — Outwrite Bookstrore and Coffeehouse is proud to announce the visit of first-time novelist Darieck Scott. He will be signing and reading from his book Traitor to the Race.

Friday, May 26, 12 noon - 2:00 PM - Truth Bookstore — Valerie B. Shaw, author of Himpressions: The Blackwomen's Guide To Pampering The Blackman. In her controversial new book, Shaw suggests that today's Blackwoman has tried every tactic I the war between the sexes except the one that works. "We haven't tried being nice." A manual; designed to keep black love going strong, featuring 101 ways to pamper your man and 50 ways to say no to sex.

GALLERY OPENINGS

Michele Wood

At M Print Art & Fine Publishing, 253 Trinity St., Atlanta, Ga., Opening reception Friday May 6th 6 - 9, Showing from May 6 - May 28, 1995.

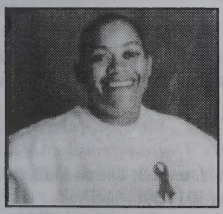
Freddie Styles

and his work will be presented at Camille Love Gallery, 320 E. Paces Ferry Rd. Opening reception Friday May 6, 6 - 9. Showing from May 6 - May 24, 1995.

Discovering Ellis Ruley

The works of Ellis Ruley will be presented at The High Museum of Art: Folk Art and Photography Galleries through July 22, 1995. Call (404) 522-6940

ANNOUNCEMENTS



I Remember Venus... friends of Venus Landin will meet at Kalo's Coffeehouse to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open mic, poetry, songs and laughter!!! Wednesday May 17, 1995, 7:30 P.M. All are welcome!

What are you doing about Pride this year?
On Sunday, May 7, 1995 at 4:00 PM the African-American Lesbian and Gay Alliance (A.A.L.G.A.) is hosting an informal discussion about the Lesbian and Gay Pride Weekend and other topics of interest to the African American Lesbian and Gay community. Light refreshments will be available. The gathering will be held at Our Cousins House, 1023 Dill Ave., Atlanta. Please call A.A.L.G.A. at 908-7371 for details.

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NATIONAL EVENTS

MAY

Atlanta
Friday, May 5-7, - Ballethnic Dance Company performs "The Leopard Tale" Atlanta Civic Center. For tickets call (404) 762-1416, (404) 817-8700

Baltimore
Saturday, May 6, 5:00 PM - 12 Midnight — Simplicity Attraction's Annual Help Them Benefit — Lithuanian Hall, 851 Hollins Street, Baltimore MD. Entertainment, dancing, BYOL, munchies, free set-ups. Attire: casual. Tickets $15.

Atlanta
Wednesday, May 17, 7:30 PM - "I Remember Venus..." friends of Venus Landin meet at Kalo's Coffeehouse, 1248 Clairmont Rd., Decatur to celebrate her 34th birthday. Open mic, readings and songs. Come share your memories. (404) 325-3733

Thursday, May 18, at 7:00 PM — Meet "Triple Threat NCAC Artist" Danny Tisdale at a book signing at Nexus Press. Tisdale's book will be available in the Performance Cafe.

Friday, May 19, 10:00 PM, Saturday, May 20, 8:00 PM, & Sunday May 21, 8:00 PM — Nexus Performance Presents - Danny: The Last African-American in the 22nd Century, A performance work complementing Tisdale's Nexus Press publication of the same title. Also, Cedric Maurice, Come Unity - Atlanta-based performance artist, choreographer and dancer debuts a movement theater work in the Performance Cafe. Come Unity explores the effects of social exploitation on African, Native American and Euro-American tribalships. The work is performed by a multi-ethnic ensemble of seven.

Saturday, May 20, 3:00 PM — ACT UP/Atlanta & Etcetera Magazine— Fluff your wigs; Wigwood '95 , The Metro, The Video Bar. 4th annual festival of Peace, Love, and Wigs will feature drag performances, variety acts, and music.

Baltimore
Saturday, May 20, 9PM - 2AM - Cricket and Beverly's White Affair. Dundalk Union Hall. Dancing, buffet, free beer & wine, BYOL. Tickets $20.00. Bobby Moore (301) 596-6167

D.C.
Friday, May 26, 10:00 PM — Black Pride Kick-Off Party — The Edge, 56 L Street SE, Washington DC. $10 before Midnight, $12 after Midnight.
Friday, May 26, 8:00 PM - 4:00 AM — The Anniversary Ball — Tracks, Under the BIG TOP, 1111 First Street SE, Washington DC. $25 At the door.

Friday, May 26, 10PM - 3AM - Woo-Baby & Carter Associates' Weekend Wet Party. Days Inn, 2700 N.Y. Ave., N.E. Bikini fashion show, mini-show, exotic dancers, cash bar, lavish buffet, dancing. $12.00 adv., $15.00 at door.

Atlanta
Saturday, May 27, 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM — West End Performing Arts Center, 945 Ralph D. Abernathy Blvd. SW, Atlanta (404) 752-7100 — Sisters of 30 Something Special presents The Personals. Tickets available from April 15 - May 15 ONLY! Advance Tickets $12, $15 at the door.

Saturday, May 27, Sisters of 30-Something Special presents Comfort Zone Productions, a NYC theatre troupe, in "The Personals". 2 shows; 4PM matinee, 8 PM evening. West End Performing Arts Center. $12.00 adv. / $15.00 door. Call (404) 804-8381.

Atlanta
Saturday, May 27, 10:00 PM - Hospitality Atlanta presents its annual Holiday Weekend Bash at Castlegate Hotel, call the H.A. Hotline (404) 708-6866
L.A.
Saturday, May 27, At the Beach... ATB presents its National Kickoff Celebration! Watch for details! (213) 969-1619

D.C.
Saturday, May 27, 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM — The Women's Weekend — Sophisticated Ladies presents Meet and Greet At The Edge, #56 L Street SE, Washington DC, 202-488-1200. Featuring Female Erotic Dancers and Art Exhibits. $6 cover.

Saturday, May 27, 9:00 PM - 4:00 AM — The Women's Weekend — Sophisticated Ladies in conjunction with Friends for Friends presents The Circle Underground, 1629 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington DC, 202-462-5575. Dancing until the morning hours! $10 cover.

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 AM — Prayer Breakfast — The Embassy Row Hotel, 2015 Massachusetts Avenue NW. FREE

Sunday May 28, 12 Noon - 8:00 PM — The Main Event — Black Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Outdoor Festival, Banneker Field, Georgia Avenue & Barry Place NW, Across from Howard University, Washington DC. Admission $5.

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 PM - 4:00 AM - The Women's Weekend — Sophisticated Ladies After Pride Party at Planet Fred, 1221 Connecticut Ave NW between M & N, Washington DC, 202-788-1866. Female Erotic Dancers, Free Caribbean Buffet! $10 cover.

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 PM - 3:00 AM - Marcking Productions Black Gay Pride Celebration. Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St. S.E. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar, $5:00.

Atlanta
Sunday, May 28, 11:00 AM - dusk - Hospitality Atlanta returns to Red Top Mountain for the 4th annual Memorial Day Picnic Celebration on beautiful Lake Alatoona; one hour north of the city. Music, dancing, fun and frolic. Vendors call (404) 627-1630

Sunday, May 28, 9:00 PM - Venus Magazine presents the first Annual Memorial Day Salute to the Black Arts Community. V's on Peachtree, 320 Peachtree St. Festive attire. Meet and greet some of our nation's finest! Music, dancing, buffet. $10.00. The following tickets / stubs / 2-for-1! Jelly's Last Jam, Sophisticated Ladies, The Personals, The Dance Theatre of Harlem, Talking Bones, Mississippi Delta, Blues For an Alabama Sky, Raisin, A Lady and a Woman, and Servant of the People, and others!

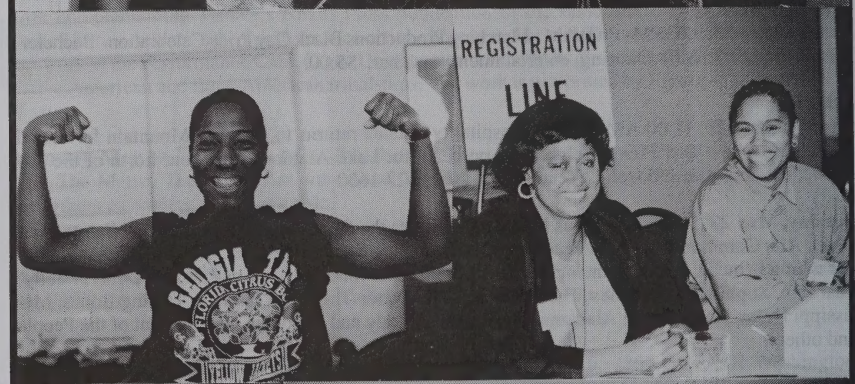
Sunday, May 28, WOMANWRITES '95: 17th annual conference for lesbian writers. May 28th - June 4th. One hour south of Atlanta. Workshops, readings, meals, dormitory sleeping, lake. $70.00 - $100.00. Send SASE by May 15th! Silver Circle, Rt. 5, Box 100, Holly Springs, MS 38635 or contact Maree at (502) 966-2420

JUNE

Atlanta
Thursday, June 8-11, - "AFROGAL" present the first Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of Gays and Lesbians. Clarion Hotel. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

N.Y.
Thursday, June 8-11, - Simplicity Attractions of NY presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS. Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swimsuit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701

OUT & ABOUT



ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
Asians and Friends/Atl., P.O. Box 13072, Atlanta, GA, 30324, (404) 876-9800 fax: (404) 876-0090
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Different Gyrl Production, PO Box 13346, Atlanta, GA 30324 (404) 908-5340
gabc - greater atlanta business coalition, 2103 N. Decatur Road, Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033 Phone (404) 377-4258 Fax (404) 37708500
Gay & Out Productions, PO Box 111, Clarkston, GA 30021-0111 Phone (404) 299-7809 Fax (404) 508-8697
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (210) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, Youth support group; P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743 Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Project Open Hand Atlanta, (404) 525-4620, Home delivered meals for people with AIDS related illness
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Silver Fingers Prod., (404)388-4624
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Sophisticated Ladies, Lesbian Social Group for Mature Women of Color (202) 788-1866
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
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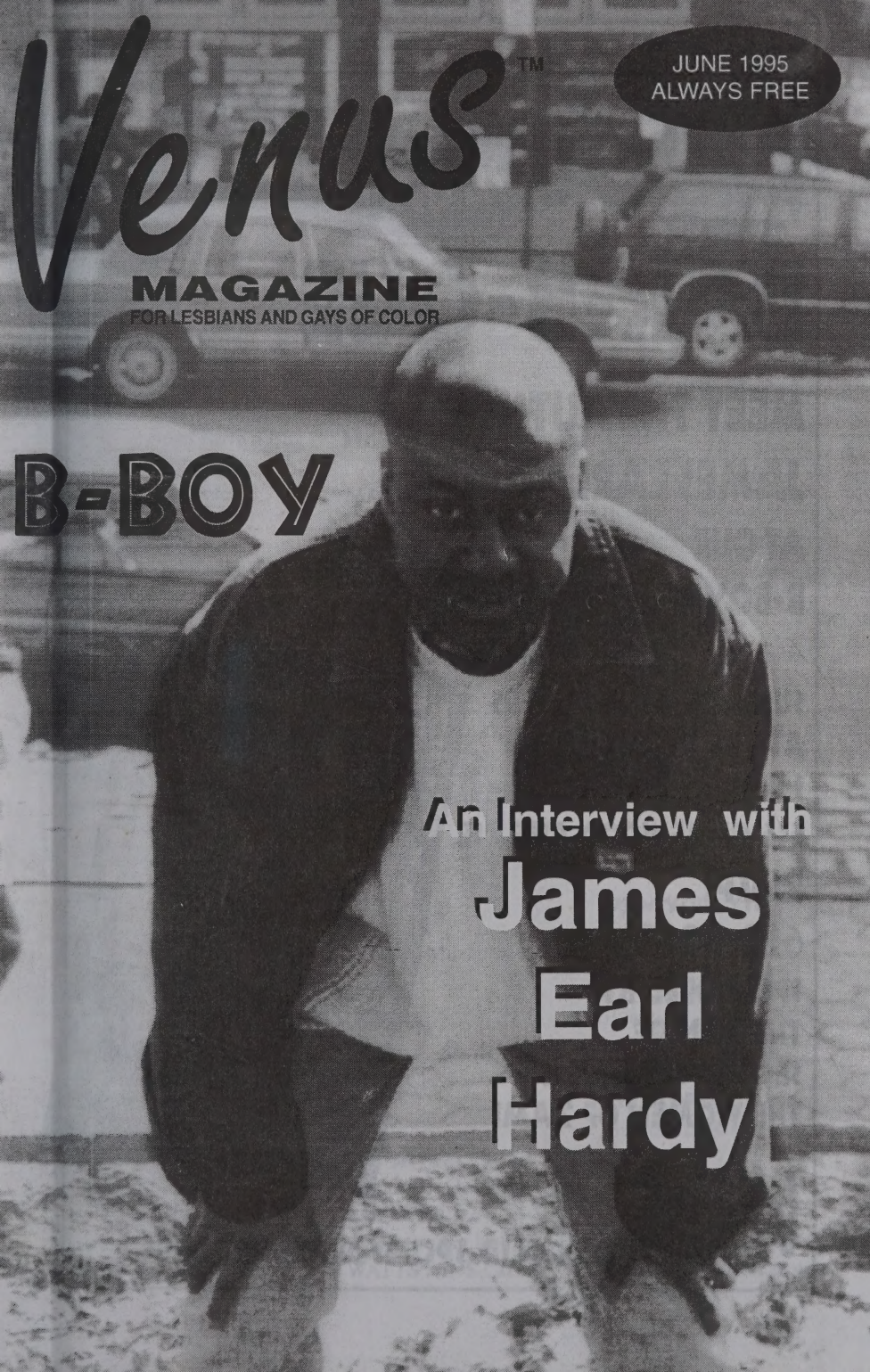

B-BOY

An Interview with James Earl Hardy

B-BOY BAR-B-QUE

MEET THE AUTHOR JAMES EARL HARDY

AT OUR
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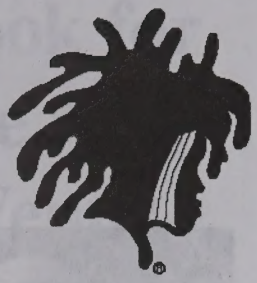

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STUDENT CENTERS:
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Clark AU
Dekalb College
Emory U.
Howard U.
Georgia Southern U.

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Milano Pizza

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Minks Package Store
Smyrna Library
Starship Enterprises
Irie Cafe
Players bar
This, That & the Other

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Dekalb College
Emory Student Center
Kalo's Coffee House
Chapter 11 Books

MACON
Tubman Museum
Topaz

BOSTON
MOCAA events
Safari Club

LOS ANGELES
The Catch One
BGLLF Office
AIDS Project L.A.
WATTS AIDS Office

WASHINGTON, D.C.
The Brass Rail
Tracks
Black Gay Pride, Inc.
Sophisticated Ladies
Events
Simplicity Attractions

BALTIMORE
Simplicity Attractions

BROOKLYN
4 Seasons events

NEW YORK CITY
The Gay & Lesbian
Center
Simplicity Attractions
Events

PHILADELPHIA
Giavonni's Room

SAVANNAH
Project Azuka, Inc.
Our Family circle events

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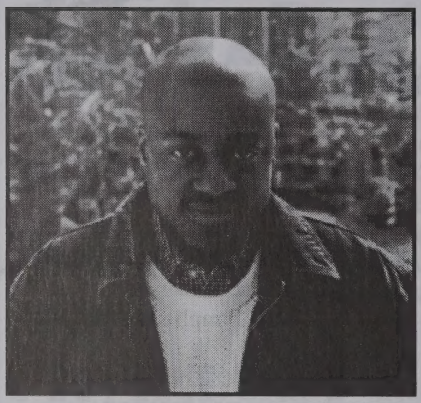
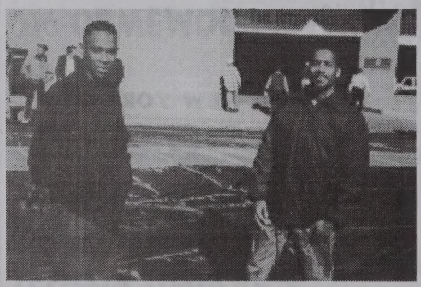


James Earl Hardy
Author of B-Boy Blues



What are you doing about Pride this year?! March with the People of Color Contingent!

Venus™

June 1995
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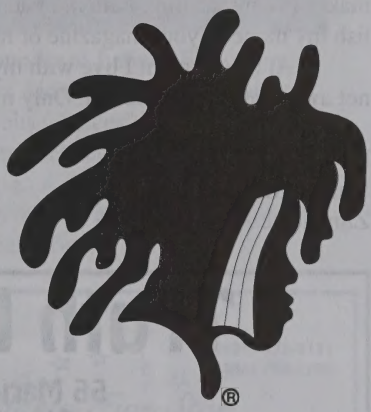

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I am interested in meeting other Black, gay guys and lesbians from your country as pen friends and communicate and I hope you could be of some assistance. I am aged 22 year old, black guy, studying to become a secondary school teacher in a small town called Mutare, in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

My hobbies are socializing, soul, African and country music, fashion designing, interior decorating, flower gardening, cooking movies and anything that makes life interesting. I am not bad looking and I would be very happy if you publish my name in your magazine or make contacts for me.

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PROFILE OF A WOMAN

Name
Aida Rentos
Age
"Young enough to handle it"
Status
Single
Career
Activist/Entreprenuer
Hometown
"Citizen of the World"
Latest book
Out For Office
by Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund

Co-Founder of Latinos En Accion, activist Aida Rentos' latest project is "Obvious Choices", an incubator co-op for entreprenuers in Avondale Estates, Georgia. Aida feels that serving others is a priveledge and plans to run for political office.

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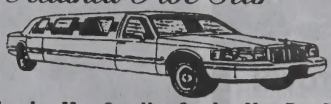

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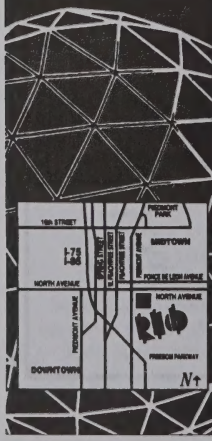

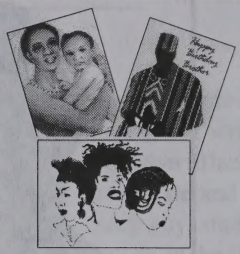

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SISTAGRAPHY™ & ZONE III PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP

Join Sistagraphy as we celebrate Black Music Month with a photographic exhibit entitled "From The Soul". The exhibit, which shows how African-American women photograph music, opens with a reception on June 23, 1995 from 7:00 p.m. until...at M-Print gallery located at 253 Trinity avenue, SW in downtown Atlanta. "From The Soul" will feature images from 23 African-American women photographers including such noted photographers as Jena Jones, Lynn Marshall-Linnemeier, Sue Ross, and Sheila Turner. The exhibit will hang in the gallery from June 23 through July 21, 1995. Please call M-Print Gallery at (404) 523-4434 for more information.

Mr. Batiste
from "The 54th Massachusetts" exhibit
Photo by Jena Jones

Lenny Kravitz
"From The Soul" exhibit
Photo by Sheila McAfee

In celebration of Juneteenth Day, Zone III Photographic workshop will present photographs documenting the men, women, and children who participate in Civil war reenactments as the 54th Massachusetts. The exhibition will open at Hammonds House Galleries on June 11, 1995 and continue through July 13, 1995.

Zone III, the south's largest association of Black photographers, has been documenting Civil war reenactments for the last four years, with particular focus on the reenactors who represent the 54th Massachusetts, the first documented black fighting regiment in US history. The heroic efforts of the 54th have been told throughout history in numerous forms and have been the subject of film documentaries as well as the Academy Award winning film "Glory". This exhibition at hammonds House is the first public display of images and imagery collected in vivid detail by Zone III photographers.

DYKE MARCH - 1995

Atlanta, Georgia

These women stopped traffic. Thousands of Lesbians, Gay women, Dykes, Bi-sexual women and other women who love women participated in Dyke March last year. Supportive gay men and others cheered the march on from the sidelines. It felt empowering to walk down the street with so many proud women. Dyke March 1994 filled the streets and highlighted lesbian visibility.

This year, the Dyke March honors the 25th anniversary of the Pride March by featuring two speakers with a long standing commitment to improving the lives of Lesbians and Gay men. Charlene Cothran and Pat Hussain have both made signifigant contributions to the Lesbian and Gay community. Charlene is the Founder, Publisher and Editor-in Chief of Venus Magazine. For years, she has been involved in Atlanta's African-American Lesbian community as a board member of Hospitality Atlanta. She has also been involved with the Lambda Community Center and served as a guest soloist with the Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus. Since returning to town with her partner Cherry Hussain, Atlanta native Pat Hussain has been deeply involved in Atlanta's Lesbian and Gay Community. Pat recently won the 1995 Human Rights Campaign Fund award. She serves on several boards including the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, (NGLTF), and Southerners on New Ground (SONG). Pat was the co-chair of the Olympics Out of Cobb Coalition, and a Grand Marshals of last year's Atlanta Pride celebration. In 1993, she was the keynote speaker at the African American Lesbian and Gay Alliance's Marquis D. Walker Humanitarian Award Banquet.

Please come to celebrate the contributions of these women, to celebrate Lesbian visibility, and to honor the 25th anniversary of the Atlanta Pride March.

The 1995 Atlanta Dyke March will be held Saturday, June 24. Participants should meet at the Charles Allen gate of Piedmont Park at 6:00PM.

by Brook Perry

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Racism Under the Rainbow

Part I by Charlene Cothran

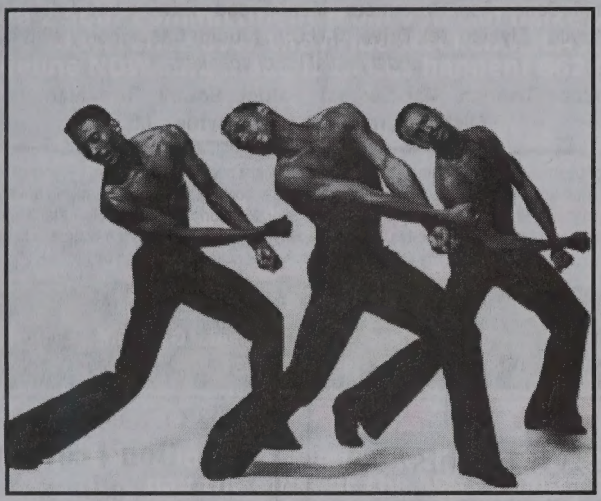
What we hope to gain by presenting this series of articles is to have African-American gay men and lesbians not be afraid or ashamed to expose any incident of racism in the larger white gay community.

It is sad but certain to say that racism is so deeply rooted in American culture that it will never end. It may take on different forms or appear more subtle in other regions of the country, but it's always there. Here in our black gay culture we must begin to address the effects of racism on our lives.

We must ask ourselves some very serious questions!! Why is it important to verbalize incidents of racism? And, as Black gay men and lesbians, who are our allies; who can we turn to for support?

The "dream" is that all gays and lesbians are walking hand and hand and singing "We Are The World" under a giant rainbow. Langston Hughes once asked "What happens to a dream deferred?" Here in Atlanta, the birth place of Dr. King's dream... deferred,...the effects of racism against black gays and lesbians has definitely festered and is running like a sore. One of the reasons why our "sore" can't heal is because we've chosen for so long to be silent about racism in gay culture, at least those who choose to be active in the "larger community." Silence, however, breeds internalized racism and self hatred. Those of us who work within the larger community are often reluctant to disturb the comfort level of white gays, especially when you're the only black person in the room, or on the board, etc. Our days of being silent must end if we intend for racism to slow it's growth. The white gay community is not "in touch" with this issue. The white gay community will never understand our walk, but let's look at what they do understand.... homophobia. When it comes to acts of homophobia, I have never seen a white gay man or lesbian fail to "cry loud and spare not." Incidents of homophobia make front page news in the white gay media. Nation wide rallies are formed almost overnight. Do you remember when everyone in the gay community, including blacks, stopped drinking orange juice because of a homophobic statement

by a Florida celebrity; when everyone stopped patronizing the Cracker Barrel because of it's homophobic policies? Well guess what folks, we've got to do the same thing, right here under the rainbow! Silence is not going to help you in the south. Do you think it's an accident that Newt Gingrich is from Georgia? Have you considered that a large part of Atlanta's White gay community would actually support him if they were straight? Have you considered that some of them silently support him now? When racism shows up, you speak up!!



One evening, after a Venus staff meeting a group of us decided to patronize a local gay bar, BURKHARTS. We entered the bar and discovered several tables occupied by gorgeous black gay men and lesbians, all buying drinks, eating, gossiping and having a good time. But one more group of blacks was more than one white patron could handle. In a voice louder that the music and chatter he screams, "We've got to turn this back into a white bar, they ain't got no money and they're suppose to know something about greens..." I personally informed the management that a guest was drunk and should be asked to leave, before he could further insult other guests. To make a long story short, the drunk was never asked to leave. The manager simply patted on the back and whispered a few words in his ear, then strolled over to our table and blurted, "He said he's sorry.", then walked away. Naturally outraged, some of us exited the bar immediately. But, others immersed in their own internalized racism chose to stay and "just ignore him." It is suspected that the drunk is actually a silent partner at the bar. Letters were written to the bar's management asking how such an incident could happen and not be properly addressed. And what would have happened if the drunken patron was a black gay man insulting white guests? Those letters have gone unanswered to this day.

"Racism Under The Rainbow" is a three part series

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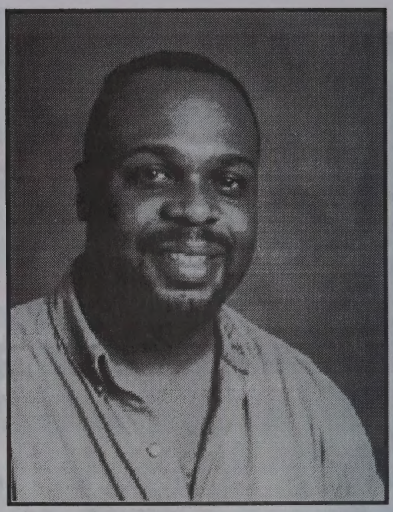
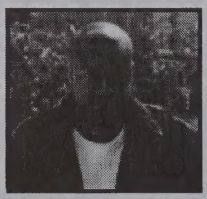
PROFILE OF A MAN

Name
Badili Jones
Age
38
Status
"Notoriously single"
Career
AIDS Educator/
Political activist
Hometown
East Orange, N.J.
Latest Book
Traitor To The Race
by Darieck Scott



Badili joined AID Atlanta earlier this year as Out Reach Coordinator for Gay men of color. He's also an active member of Latinos en Accion and Second Sunday, a discussion group for gay men of color.

MEET JAMES EARL HARDY



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☐ Yes ☐ No

3) How often do you volunteer for any nonprofit organization?

☐ 2-4 Hrs./Wk. ☐ 2-4 Hrs./Mo.

☐ 2-4 Hrs./Yr. ☐ None

4) How many African-American gay men or lesbians do you know who are HIV+?

☐ 1 - 4 ☐ 5 - 9 ☐ more than 10

5) If you were available to donate your time, what type skills do you have to give?

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☐ Domestic/Housekeeper ☐ Administrative/Organizer

☐ Medical/Psychological ☐ Driver/Deliveries

☐ Telephone/Interviewer ☐ Accounting

☐ Cook ☐ Builder/Handyman/woman

See page 45 for a list of African-American AIDS organizations who need your help now.

An Interview with James Earl Hardy

by Douglas Jones

The byline of B-Boy Blues reads, "seriously sexy, fiercely funny, Black-on-Black love story. In this, his first novel, Brooklyn born author James Earl Hardy, 28, gives us a view into the world of Black gay men which is exactly that. It is an engaging and whimsical story which invites readers into the lives of the quick witted and fiery Mitchell, and his boyfriend, B-Boy extraordinaire, Raheim. As the story offers a contemporary perspective of the lives of Black gay men sans the pandering to the White gay world which permeates too many of our stories, Hardy has achieved phenomenal success, just consult the Lambda Literary List (at 25,000+ copies sold, the book holds the number two spot) or ask Hardy's publisher, Alyson Publications. And, of course, success is not without its controversy.

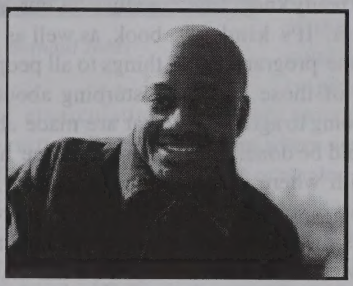

Photo by Alvin Agarrot

Venus Magazine: What inspired you to write the book?

James Earl Hardy: Simply that there was not a story which I could point to on the bookshelf that mirrored the world that I and many of the people whom I know, specifically brothers live in. So, after years of complaining about not seeing it, I decided maybe I should just write the book myself. And that's what I did.

VM: The most prevalent theme is how we as Black gay men love one another. In terms of constructing a Black gay identity, is this meant to be a step in that direction?

JEH: Well, yes, I think so. Personally, I don't think many of us really love and value ourselves for who we are as Black gay and bisexual men. It's hard to do that in a society where your life is devalued and debased and degraded every single day, not only in so-called mainstream media and images, but in the so-called Black community and the so-called lesbian and gay community. I hope that B-Boy Blues is a beginning for us as Black gay and bi-sexual men to really create images, works, and other things that really say who we are and what we are about. I hope these things will affirm us in a way that only we can really do because, quite frankly, B-Boy Blues would not have been written if I.or someone else did not come along and say that we have to stop waiting for other folks to define us. Only we can define ourselves.

VM: I hear you. You mentioned

something that I wanted to touch on: The homophobia, the racism, whether or not it's internalized, how can we as Black gay and bisexual men begin to strip those exterior layers away so that we are not hiding from ourselves, nor from each other, but rather coming to a point where we can build with one another a viable, visible community?

JEH: That's a hard question to answer because well, one thing I tell people often is that B-Boy Blues is just one story about the lives that some gay and bi-sexual men of African descent may lead and I don't believe that there is a clear cut agenda that we can put forth that all Black gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered people are going to embrace in order for us to overcome the 'isms' and 'phobias' that we need to overcome. We're a very diverse group of people, so I don't really know how to answer that question. It's kind of dangerous to put forth one program that will try to tackle some of those issues because not everyone is going to agree that that's the way that it should be done. That will have a lot to do with where one is geographically, where one is socially and politically, culturally, spiritually, and sexually. But one thing we all have to do and it's something that hasn't happened yet is acknowledge how all of those 'isms' and 'phobias' impact on our lives and snap out of this denial.

VM: Denial of...?

JEH: Well, I think that too many of us have become so complacent in our repression and oppression that we will not challenge the 'isms' and 'phobias' that happen around us. How many of us have actually sat in choir log or in the congregation at a church and heard a minister or a so-called brother or sister in fellowship denounce homosexuals. That is where it has to begin, it has to start at home. I guess what I'm trying to say is that we cannot expect to challenge America, society, if we have not tended to the business in our own backyard.

VM: It starts with the truth of our reality, individually

JEH: Oh, definitely.

VM: About affirming— images outwardly, Raheim is an intensely sexual person and we as a community, especially a community of Black gay men, seem to glorify that B-Boy, banji boy look. By reinforcing that are we not feeding into the objectification of ourselves and brothers as sexual monsters?

JEH: I don't see Raheim as a sexual monster. This has been put forth to me before and what I've always said is that people have the bad habit of projecting their own issues and ideologies on the work. Raheim is just one individual and neither he nor any other character in the book, as well as the book itself, can be all things to all people. The thing I find most disturbing about some of the comments that are made about Raheim is that most people reduce him to nothing but rough trade. You know, here is an individual who, throughout the course of a story, shows us that he most certainly is not. Quite frankly I don't think that there is anything wrong with Raheim being sexual because we are all sexual beings.

VM: Well, not sexual so much as intensely sexual. You know the imagery of the baggy pants, the larger than life image of being straight-up-and-down hard. And, yes, we do see Raheim's growth, but so much of his growth occurs towards the end of the book, and I wonder if this depiction intensifies the debate over Black gay men with larger-than-life penises and hotter-than-reality sexual libidos?

JEH: Well, I don't think that B-Boy Blues is going to make people believe what they don't already believe. That's the point I'm trying to make. For example, I responded to an individual's letter this past week in

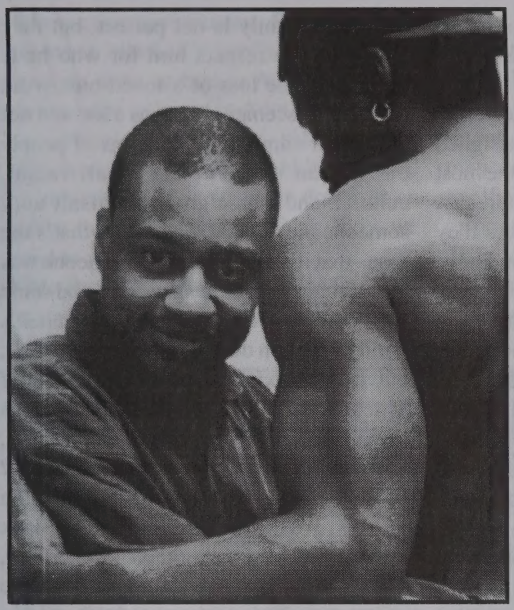

Photo by John Bernard Jones

which he accuses me of emasculating, castrating, and finally cutting Raheim down to size at the end of the book. Now, he did not say why he felt that way, but my guess, and judging from what he did say about the story, is that he was particularly disturbed that here was this big, bad B-Boy who decided that he was going to give himself to the man he loved. Quite frankly, those are the types of pathologies that we need to address: Raheim being this big, bad B-Boy, so we, unfortunately, think that there is only one way he can be: he's a real man, he's a top! he could not possibly be a bottom. Addressing specifically what you asked me, Raheim's personality, his aura, his being, is very sexual. Just because he is that way does not mean that he represents that stereotypical model. I don't think that he does.

VM: You definitely give us an image of Mitch and Raheim struggling, both inwardly, with themselves, and outwardly, with each other and the world in which they live. As Black gay and bi-sexual men trying to build community, is this giving us hope for the future?

JEH: I sincerely hope so. That is one thing which many people who have written me have said: The novel has given them hope. I've been accused of giving people a happy ending and I don't see it as such. Mitchell and Raheim may have reunited at the end of the story but they have a lot of growing to do, both as a couple and as individuals, so I really see it as a beginning. But, let's say it is a happy ending, so what! What's wrong with stories about us that allow us to be happy at the end? I think we're so conditioned to see ourselves tragically, to always seeing ourselves struggling and never coming to a point where we can be at peace that when we're presented with a story that is not so much the opposite, but has an alternative ending, we freak out. We need to realize that there's nothing wrong with being happy. And if we do think that there is something wrong with being happy then we've got a problem.

VM: There's something wrong with that. You're out there trying to offer somebody a view to freedom and they're saying, 'Oh, no, just keep me in shackles.'

JEH: Exactly.

VM: We also get a view of Raheim and Mitch struggling through their masculine and feminine issues. Besides being ultimately real in not just our relationships, but our daily lives, what was that commentary about?

JEH: I would hope that after seeing that story played out that folks would realize that it really does not make sense to play

those types of roles. We always seem to have this checklist that individuals whom we come across have to fulfill. When Mitchell and Raheim first meet each other it's obvious that they've already assigned each other a role that they both, for the most part, feel very comfortable in. But, really, who benefits from that and who are they really playing those roles for? You know, I think too often that we, as homosexuals, fall into the trap of copying the relationship behavior of heterosexuals. So, though as lesbian and gay people our answer to the popular talk show question, 'Who's the man and who's the woman?' is almost always, 'Nobody's the man and nobody's the woman,' we know that's not true because we play it out every day of our lives in the relationships that we have with people of the same sex. It's important for us to realize that we do it, but it's even more important for us to realize why we do it. I don't think most of us realize that we're not so much doing that because we want to, but because society says we have to, we're simply conditioned to think that way. When you grow up in a society where you're constantly bombarded with images of heterosexual coupling, relationships, and romance, you are naturally going to adopt those morays and values. It's important to realize that they just might not be the right thing for you.

VM: Issues of coming out: We've already stated that this is a story which is moving towards the beginning of creating community. As a community of Black lesbian and gay people we are just now trying to come out to ourselves, let alone our families. And when we do finally come out, too many of us are dismembered from our communities and our families. That being the case, is the relationship of ease and comfort between Mitch and his family a realistic and fair depiction?

JEH: I think so. Let me tell you why. Mitchell's family is not perfect, but they have come to respect him for who he is because of the loss of a loved one. And that type of scenario happens a lot, and not just in our community, in terms of people of African descent, but in all racial, cultural, and ethnic groups. It isn't until someone dies of AIDS - usually that's the case - that it's discovered that someone was gay, lesbian, bi, or transgendered and some soul searching starts. Of course, Mitchell's family situation does not exist everywhere, but it does exist. And I'm sure that if Mitchell was distant and detached from his family, folks would probably be saying, why does Hardy have to be so predictable? I was not going to endorse pathology, quite frankly. We have enough images of Black families not supporting their lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered members, so there was no need for me to recreate that negativity. But, I don't think his family situation is idyllic, as some people have said. His family does not, for the most part, accept him as a gay man. What they have done, instead, is try to understand him. Mind you, Mitchell, for the most part, has somewhat playful conversations with his Mother about Raheim, but his relationship with his step-father is still on edge because he is a gay man. And, quiet as it's kept, people talk about Adam, his brother, being so accepting of him, but people need to pay close attention to what Adam says about Raheim specifically.

VM: When Mitchell asks him what he thinks of Raheim, Adam says 'he's a real man.' What does he mean by that?

JEH: Adam means Raheim is just like him, and Mitchell isn't. So, on the surface while Adam loves his brother and will probably love him until the day he dies, he is still very uncomfortable with him being gay. And that connection is drawn through the presentation of Raheim as a model of so-called homosexuality which he [Adam]

did not even think existed. Really the only person in Mitchell's family who seems to open up arms to him is Aunt Ruth. I'm sure most of us know an Aunt Ruth. I don't see Mitchell's family situation as unrealistic at all. Quite frankly, we need to stop complaining when we don't see an image that presents us pathologically, we need to get out of that mode.

VM: But, I wonder about our conditioning, I wonder about our growth, I wonder if we don't talk about all the things that hurt, and get all the hurt out there how can we start to talk about the things that heal? You know what I mean?

JEH: Yeah.

VM: What sort of support have you received? I see Dr. Farajaje-Jones and E. Lynn Harris have both supported you. What other support have you received from the gay and lesbian community, other Black gay writers, or just writers and society in general?

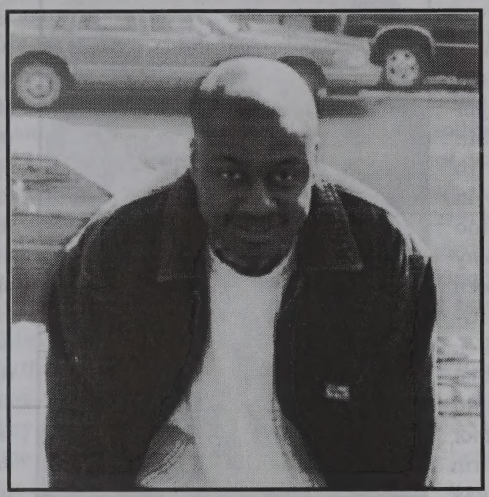

Photo by Alvin Agarrot is taken in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, NY, across from Spike Lee's Joint. This is the neighborhood that B-Boy Blues' protagonist, Mitchell Crawford, lives.

JEH: For the most part the Black gay and bi-sexual men whom I've met on the book tour have been very supportive and they basically have thanked me for telling their story. That is very profound, because when you create something as an artist, you hope that people will in some way embrace it, but you can never imagine the type of love that people will offer because of something that you have written. Nothing I have ever written has elicited the type of response that B-Boy Blues has had. I never could have been prepared for it.

VM: Well, no one else is presenting us with positive images of ourselves and saying that it's okay for us to be Black gay men and for us to, possibly, love one another. Certainly you knew that the response was going to be enormous.

JEH: Well, I expected B-Boy Blues to fulfill a hunger because, as you said, there's never been a story like this told before. But you can never predict the way people will respond to your work. I think B-Boy Blues also poses a very big challenge, particularly to us. I think it has challenged us to really look at ourselves as gay and bi-sexual men. It has forced us to really look in the mirror.

VM: Do you think we like what we see?

JEH: I don't think many of us are comfortable with the image. I have gotten some flack from folks about the story I tell, the way I tell it, some of the depictions of the characters, the ending. But often times those reactions say much more about those people than about the work. In terms of Black heterosexual folks I do have some Black heterosexual fans, overall, there's been a deafening silence from them.. Especially the Black media. I've gotten almost no coverage in the Black heterosexual media. For the Black media it has been a question

of acknowledging a 'lifestyle' with which they are not comfortable. It forces conversation about something they don't want to talk about. The White gay media doesn't understand it. For too many of the White gay and lesbian publications who have taken it upon themselves to review B-Boy Blues, there has been this very condescending, catty attitude and tone. Either they review the author, whom they do not know, because they don't like what they're reading or they review the book I did not write. In other words, "Why did Mr. Hardy have to present the story in this too Black, too strong voice? Why couldn't it have been done in a multi-cultural way? Etc., etc. It's funny that White folks would expect me, an author of color, to affirm them as White gay people and White authors have not been held to the same standard when it comes to their characterizations of people of color. But, I expected all of that. I told Alyson Publications before B-Boy Blues was released, 'Do not expect a mountain pile of clips from the White gay and lesbian press or from the Black heterosexual press to send out with B-Boy Blues, because you will not get it.' Unfortunately, it's a fact of life. We're dealing with two distinct, so-called communities that, for the most part, only want to respect and accept only one part of us. Black gay fiction in the past decade has meant stories about Black gay men that place us in a White gay world. Then, here comes B-Boy Blues which places us in the type of world that most of us live in and love in and they just can't take it. They just can't handle it. I have not been at all surprised by those responses, but I would hope that the debate that B-Boy Blues has seemed to stir in some lesbian and gay circles, and some Black circles, and some Black lesbian and gay circles, will at least encourage people to try to understand that there are different worlds out there that exist apart from their own and that in order for us to understand one another and to appreciate each other for who we are, we need to respect those differences. That's something that neither the White gay camp nor the Black heterosexual camp wants to do.

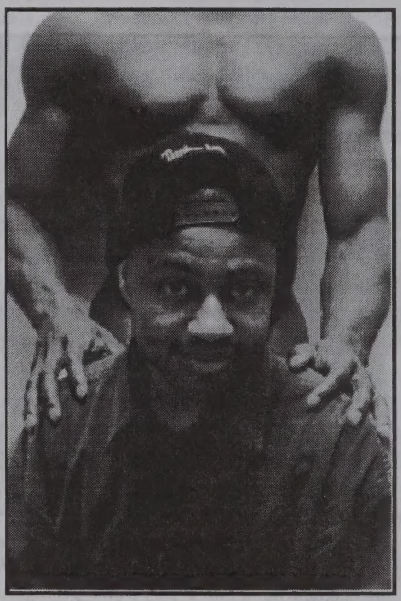

Photo by Bernard Jones

VM: It's interesting that you started speaking about that because I want you to comment on the struggle that you had bringing the book to the marketplace and then its subsequent success and how that is a direct reflection of the inability of publishers, agents, etc., to understand and accept the fact that there are realties different from what they're used to, but still entirely valuable and substantial.

JEH: Yeah, the book was turned down by some two dozen publishers and that didn't surprise me either. But, I believe that most of those publishers now realize that not

only is there a market out here for these types of stories, but that they have to change their way of thinking when it comes to the market itself. In other words, yes! Black people read. The validity of a title cannot be measured on the question of whether or not White people are going to read this book. We're talking about stories with universal themes. I just wish one of those very absent-minded, close-minded publishers would have just thought for a moment and said, 'Well, this is a love story.' The only difference here is that this is about two Black men. Many heterosexual women who have read the book told me, 'I was sixty, seventy, eighty pages into the story and it just completely slipped my mind that I was reading a story about two Black men. I could see myself in Mitchell's shoes.' I believe that our stories are very distinct because they're about us, but we're human just like everyone else. Unfortunately, the bottom line is the dollar and because some of these publishers have seen that B-Boy Blues has sold twenty-five-thousand copies in less than six months, they're definitely going to try to jump on the band wagon. 'We need to find ourselves a James Earl Hardy.' It's that Spike Lee syndrome again. I wish that the so-called White gay and lesbian community would not be so hostile and indifferent and that the so-called Black community would not be so silent.... But, I guess that's a lot to hope and wish for (chuckles).

VM: Hey, but we've been some praying people for a long time (more chuckles).

JEH: See.

VM: Those struggles, the initial reception of the book or the lack thereof, how has that dictated the need for us, as Black gay and lesbian folks, to support one another, be it in ventures such as this publishing or networking and establishing everyday connections? Again, you commented earlier on the presence of this pathology of tragedy, but there also seems to be this pathology of competition, 'I'm the only one. I'm the only one that can exist, this is all that we need to hear right here and right now.'

JEH: I'll allude to something you said earlier about wanting freedom. They're too many of us walking around in a post-traumatic slave-syndrome state. We are afraid to think for ourselves, afraid to do for ourselves. We feel that we need the affirmation and validation of White people-gay, straight, bi, or otherwise - to do or say anything for ourselves. It's a sickness and it has to be treated as a sickness. I do believe that projects like B-Boy Blues can help in the healing and make us realize that it's up to us, it's our destiny, it's our fate and only we can shape it, only we can form it, only we can make it happen.

VM: Well, in terms of writing, what are your plans for the future? Can we expect to hear more from Mitch, Raheim, and Junior?

JEH: Oh, definitely, there will be a sequel. I don't know when it's coming out, but I have begun to work on it.

VM: This has been a wonderful, wonderful conversation and I've thoroughly enjoyed it. On behalf of Venus Magazine, I'd like to thank you for your time and your example.

JEH: Thank you. It's with the support of publications like Venus that we get to reach our target audience. You guys also are making history, because every single periodical, every single book, every single poem, every letter, that we write today will help so many others tomorrow. So, we're just recording history together.

VM: Absolutely. Well, I look forward to seeing you at Charis Bookstore on June 16 and at Outwrite on June 17.

Doug Jones is a novelist from Brooklyn, NY

Friday June 23,1995

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  starting 5PM
- Grant Park-5K Pride Run
  Front Runners - 621-5007
- Aids Candlelight Vigil
  John Howell Park - 8:00 pm
  AID Atlanta
- Commitment Ceremony
  Piedmont Park - 7:00 pm
  Atlanta Couples Together

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- Family entertainment from 10-2
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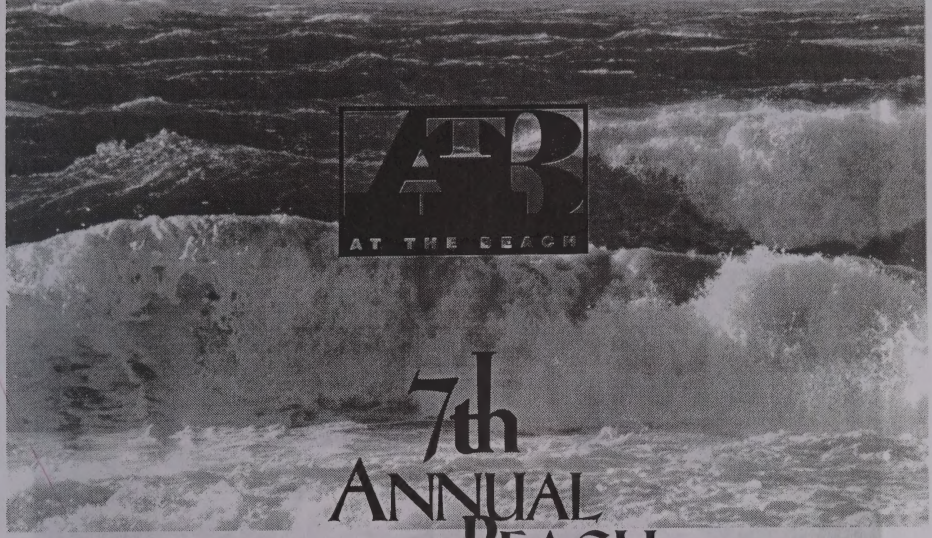

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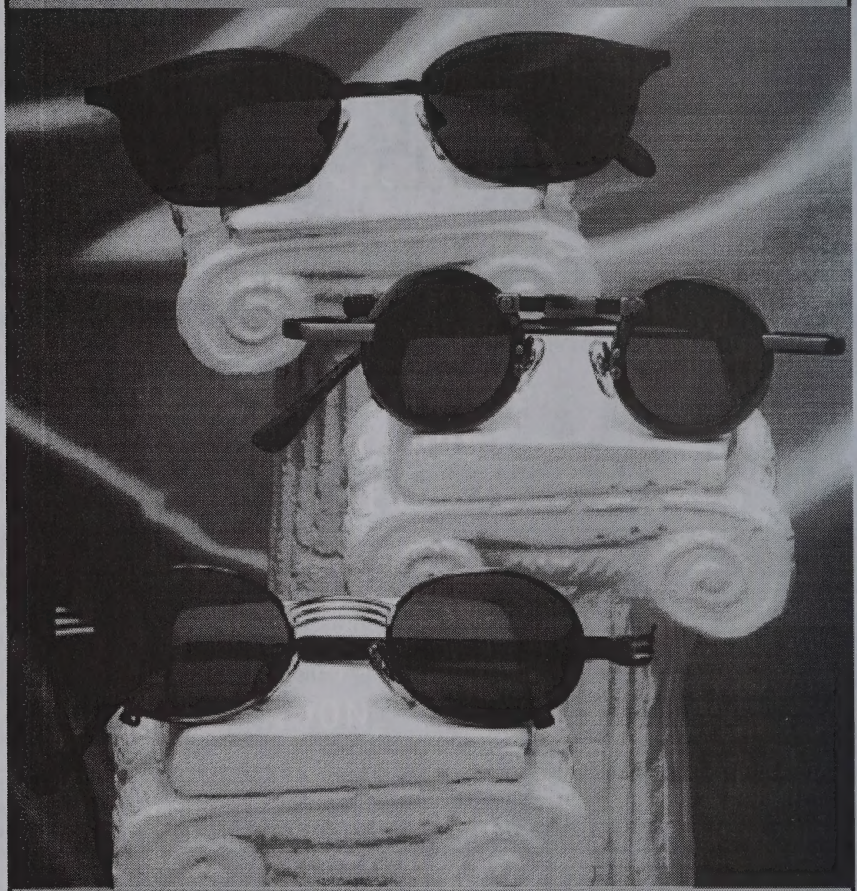

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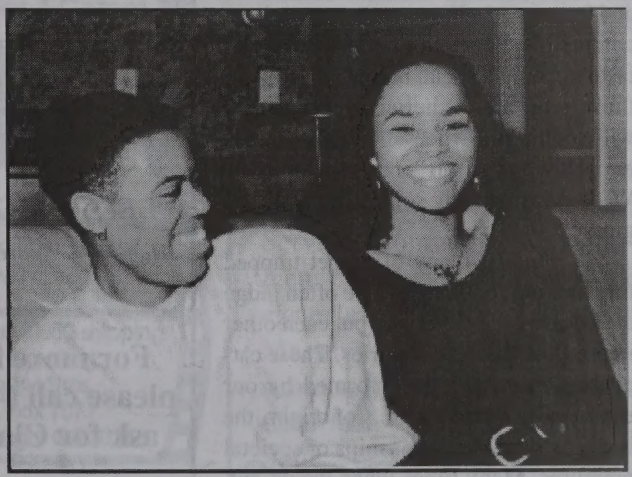
LOOKING FOR LOVE

by Carla Anderson, M.S.

Ah, summer! The time when days are longer, nights are warmer and our minds wander into flights of fancy or fantasy. Often, this is a time when we construct or renew vows to break from our winter's cocoon and find that special someone. Something in the air fills our spirits and flows over our hearts. Some of us, on the other hand, are launched into search mode.

Our intensity builds and we find ourselves initiating glances as we lounge on Atlanta's many restaurant patios. We may even gather our nerves and approach that man who's always walking his dog in the park everyday. Or that woman sipping a Cafe Mocha while reading Venus magazine. And once we have gotten their attention, then what? How do we decipher if this is who we want for just now or forever?

One initial clue is the response to your approach. Even the shy creature, if the feelings are amicable, will let you know if they are interested. A rude rebuff or total blow-off is a big signal to direct your interest elsewhere. Being a pursuer is fine however, it may be best not to pursue someone who takes great



pleasure in watching you climb obstacle after obstacle that they have thrown you way. Not being available more than all of the time, canceled dates (only to see them later while you are out), and phone calls being sporadically returned add up to more than playing hard to get. Besides, there is sure to be someone else who will fell more welcoming to you and all that you are. Buying someone's affections will only increase your debt and not your chances.

Another character that is best to be avoided while you are out and about is the "drama queen." This is the woman who overreacts to every single word or action, or the man who always has a terrible, awful, no good very bad day. Both focus a great deal of energy and delight telling you about it but do not have any room in their lives to discover who you are, your needs and wants. They may be merely looking for a spectator to their lives. After a while, that audience seat feels awfully hard on the butt.

As we make our journeys through the world and ourselves, it is very comforting to find someone whose interests and focus are similar to our own or at least compatible. For example, if you find distaste in being a social butterfly, avoid all those who are. Otherwise, resentment will soon build when "meet my friends and the bar night" rolls around or Wednesday evening softball practice begins.

Finally, many of us get trapped into looking for "a type." We often judge the book by the cover and put each other in pre-determined categories. These categories may have been formed by our experiences with our family of origin., the baggage of past relationships or societal pressures. Many times when we go out, we have our dream icon pasted in front of our eyes and we refuse to consider anyone else. Instead, allow yourself to connect with others on a wider range of levels. It is not necessary to make everyone we meet at the club, coffeehouse or gym a lover, boyfriend or girlfriend. Many of us have found that their greatest long term relationships began as friendships. Still others have discovered that their most treasured friend fits their "type" the least.

Carla Anderson is a psychotherapist practicing in Atlanta.

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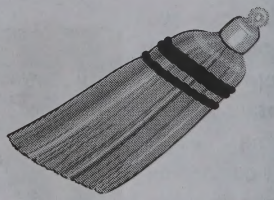

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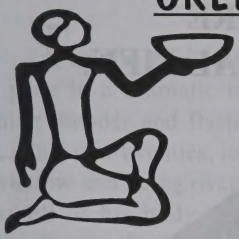

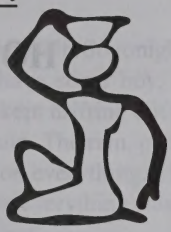

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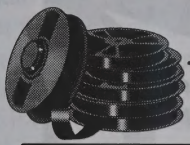

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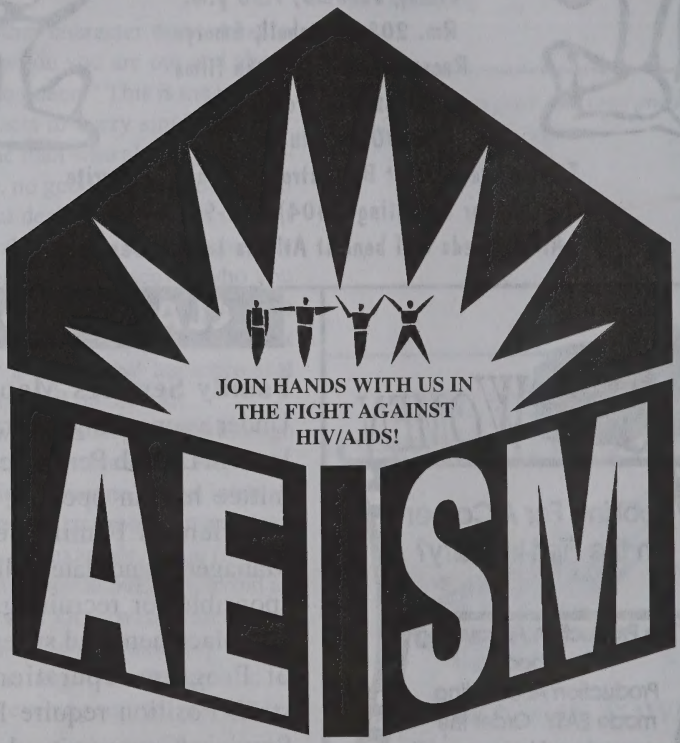

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THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The rain swept across the window pane in a dramatic interludes of crashing thunder and flashing light. A man, in his mid-twenties, looking out of his window and being overwhelmed by the smell of his body trapped in the clothes strewn all over the room. Beer cans and empty dope bags lay everywhere. This room looked much like the rooms that bordered it, except perhaps in size and type of furniture. All the rooms led into a hallway that in turn led into a street that was saturated with the hopelessness of drugs, the misery of daily living, and the inability to do anything at all bout it-or so it had seemed for the past six months.

There was a constant commotion in the hall. Arguments, whisperings, conversations, and threats always filled the air. He could not believe it, but here he was living in a crack house. Silly as it sounded he liked to call it "geek house," the name he heard in a song, "can't eat, can't sleep, all you wanna do is geek, geek, geek." The song fit him and the house to a "T."

Tonight was so very different because things had begun changing. About a month ago he had developed shingles which the doctors had told him was caused by his drug usage and his sexual promiscuity. Ultimately, he knew being positive meant that he needed to begin taking better care of himself. So tonight, instead of trying to have some boy, or chase a hit, his mind kept drifting out of the window into the rain. The rain, pouring, streaming down on everything. The rain was trying to make everything clean. But he knew it could not.

He had walked the streets many nights in the rain and never did it make any difference. He knew it would not be any different for the people who moved, hustled, and got hustled under its dismal reign tonight.

He had not ever met such people before in his life, however, at this point in time he was one of them. They were the nasty, untrustworthy, and heartless. He knew this was not the case and had learned most emphatically that people were people, dressed up or naked. He felt he had probably known these creations of destruction, as children. He went to school, to church, and to the playground with them. Looking at them stand under the rain, he wondered how they and how he had made the transformation.

Transforming into things he did not want to be near and even more terrible, transforming into what he had become. He just wanted to get back. Get back to being happy, socially acceptable, purposeful, lovable and intelligent. Rather than being a faggot hidden in a room where he enticed men for sex with

dope, barely making ends meet, living in the shadow of the stigma of being HIV positive, and most dreadfully being afraid to acknowledge these things.

His mind seemed almost capable of exploding. His reasoning ability stopped reasoning. His brain picked up whatever fragments it held and threw them, much like the wind blowing the drops of rain outside his window, almost identical to the way the people outside the window were driven by their desire to escape of to find themselves.

He was not sure of either, For the longest time, he was no sure if he was searching for something or if he was running from something. The lightening flashed and the thunder followed. The noise in the hallway grew as well as the stench in his nostrils. Out of all this he found not a clue.

In almost the same instant, silence screamed at him from what seemed like a million miles away. He looked not through the window but into the window pane. A sight that was more frightening than calming. He had not wanted to look at that person 'c compulsion to see, however, picked him up to take a deeper gaze at himself in the mirror. He began to cry.

All of the years of hiding came tumbling upon his head. His mirror became a moving picture of years of self-hatred and self-loathing for being black, for being gay, for not being successful enough, for not being good enough and ultimately not being HIV negative. The HIV concluded that the other things must be true.

Then for a time all he could do was see his tears, hear his sobs, and feel his pain. It kept coming and coming and they the lightness finally returned - after so may years. The revelation followed much like the awesome misery he lived through day in and day out. "He had made it." Thought he lay in a dump in the most crime-ridden section of town and he owned nothing except all that was given to him or what he had stolen. He felt like a mangled dog that had gone into battle and lost, but he had survived. That was it in the midst of his despair he finally had been given his answer and that was the clear and present fact that he was here right nos. Whatever challenges he had coming; he could face because surely he had gone through the worst possible scenario.

The tears dwindled and a smile began to form. He felt totally weird smiling all alone. It was as if only he and God knew what the truth was, but for now that was all that mattered. He could possibly make it back through the transformation. If he could make the journey of a thousand miles in the dark, then surely as the sun would rise again, he could take a single step in the light.

A knock came to the door. "What's up," he bellowed. "It's me, Boo." It was his friend Lacey. "You alright?" she inquired. "Yeah, I'm alright, You alright, and everything is alright."

Papillon is a freelance writer living with AIDS in Atlanta.

I'm in love and I hate it. This woman who causes me to lose sleep, miss meals, and go places I don't want to be has no idea, I think.

She is hot, she's smart, she smells wonderful and she's funny. She loves to dance, she's so interesting and she is driving me crazy. She lives her life as a lesbian, she is. I live as a straight, married woman, I am not.

This situation was never planned, expected, wanted or any such animal. I am a lesbian in the closet living an outward lie. I have had affairs with women all in my same circumstance. I have not been in love since I was a teenager and because of the pain I promised myself this would never happen again. Twenty years later I am faced with this again. I am afraid to approach her about my true feelings for fear she may be interested in me beyond just the friendship we have cultivated. I would not be able to give her the commitment she surely deserves. I ache for her. She has no lover in her life now, and she's healing from a bad relationship, another reason not to make any sudden moves.

I am afraid as I stew in my own juices, some woman will come along and be the special person I want to be to her. She says she will wait for "Ms. Right" before becoming involved again. Her false admiration is working me overtime. She thinks I am so generous and open-minded. She wishes other straight people could be as accepting as I am concerning gay men and lesbians. She says "Most straight people do not even try to understand," and through all of this I am trying like hell to maintain my "trained seal," happy, straight wife, the closeness of your body is not affecting me in any way look." This is an Oscar winning performance y'all, but the actress is getting tired of the stage.

I want to be with her. This is not a relationship I would want to hide. I don't want to see her in dark places, out of town, in seclusion, that won't work with her.

I see her often and when I don't, I make a way, sometimes I feel like a stalker. She's every where I am without taking a step. I day dream of holding her and we don't even want to do night. She may be the straw that breaks the camel's back and that thought terrifies me. I operated with these fear chains for so long that it's almost comfortable. But other times like now its a bit much.

I guess destiny will answer it all. It is rough loving her as I do and not being able to tell anyone but you.

JOMANDI DOES JUNTEENTH FEATURING: THE BARKAYS AND ATLANTA'S OWN

COOL JOE & THE FUNKY SOUL SYMBOLS

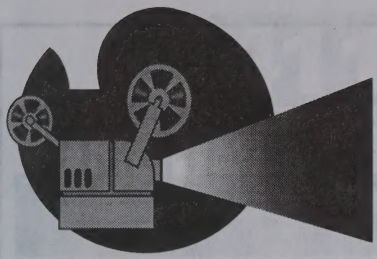
In the Beginning there was nothingness, when suddenly the Beat descended out of the boiling firmament. The Holy Forefathers - James Brown, Sly Stone & George Clinton - shaped The Beat into Flesh. As the particles of The Beat expanded and infiltrated all the corners o the earth, begetting music most divine, the people felt The Funk, and IT WAS GOOD!

photo by Sheila Turner

"Wiggle wiggle wiggle wiggle..." wail dual vocalists Ronni Gizmo and Adrienne Fishe, decked out in psychedelic threads and moving in synchronized choreography. Drummer/band leader Daryl Stewart slams out a persuasive and sinewy beat, his head nodding like a hip Buddha imparting funky knowledge. Jonathan Bond's guitar cements the foundation with the percolating keys of Ted Baskin & Bunny Wilder, While the virtuoso bass slappin' and thumpin' of Torrance Scott weaves a propulsive thread through the sonic mosaic. Sax player "E-Man" Eric Armstrong grins widely and blows, icing the cake with licks influenced by the Maceo Parker lexicon.

Shaking bodies twist and bop from the back of the room up to the edge of the stage. A variety of ethnic and racial types are represented, and there is a clear unity of purpose - LET'S TURN THIS MUTHA OUT! Both true believers & recent converts participate, representing a fact that becomes impossible to ignore with each punchy riff and solid downbeat that the band unleashes; Cool Joe & The Funky Soul Symbols are here to stay, and they will rock you world!

Formed in the late 80's by Daryl Stewart, Cool Joe quickly became one of the hardest working & most exciting bands in town, their impressive list of achievements growing along with them. A brief synopsis: the were nominated with James Brown & Ray Charles for the GA Soul Band of The Year in the 1991 New South Music Awards, they performed a tune in the HBO film Travelin' Man featuring John Lithgow, they were voted Best Dance Band of the Year in Creative Loafing's "Best of Atlanta 1993," they received the A-Town Music Award for Best Local Talent of 1994, and they've opened for every from Patti Labelle to Color Me Badd to Deee-Lite.



THE ATLANTA AFRICAN FILM SOCIETY AND WEST END PERFORMING ARTS CENTER PRESENTS "100 YEARS OF CINEMA: BLACK INDEPENDENT FILM SCREENINGS

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of cinema, a variety of films by black filmmakers from the 1960's through the 90's will be presented by the Atlanta African Film Society as part of their winning one of the 1995 Regional Designation awards in the Arts.

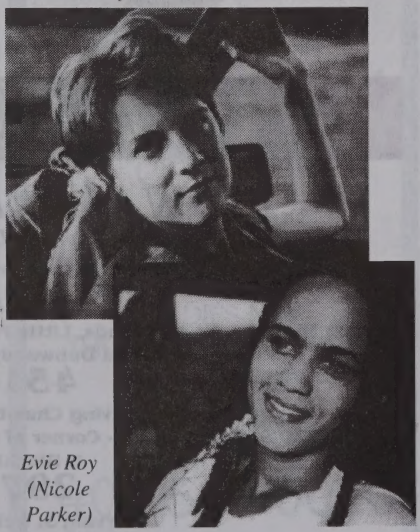
Some of the films to be presented include the classic "Hair Piece", a film for nappy headed people; "Color Adjustment", a documentary on TV and its relationship to blacks in America; and "Bush Mama, starring Barbara O, by Hale Gerimay, director of "Sankofa" and "Monday's Girls", a new short film on initiation rites of African girls, from black British filmmaker, Ngozi Onwardah, director of the films, "Body Beautiful", "And Still I rise", and "Coffee Colored Children".

Place: West End Performing Arts center, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd.
Date/Time: Thursdays at 7 p.m. June 22 - July 13, 1995
Cost: $2.00 - public, free for AAFS members
For more information call: (404) 818-6444

TWO GIRLS IN LOVE

"The Incredibly True Adventures of Two girls in Love" is a touching and comic story of first love between two girls in their senior year of high school. Randy Dean, (Laurel Holloman), a rebellious tomboy who lives with her lesbian aunt and her aunt's lover in a working class neighborhood, falls in love with Evie Roy, (Nichole Parker), a smart and beautiful African-American who is one of the most popular girls at their high school. Directed by Maria Maggenti, the film is scheduled to open June 30 in Theaters everywhere.

Randy Dean (Laurel Holloman)



Evie Roy (Nicole Parker)

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The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

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WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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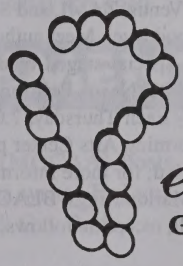

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sunday, June 4 - Meeting at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave. SW at 4 p.m. African American participation in Pride will be discussed. Call 908-7371 for more infomation.

Tuesday June 13, 1995 - Living the Life Well, an open forum on HIV/AIDS in Atlanta's gay, bisexual & lesbian community. At Grady's Infectious Disease Center, 341 Ponce de Leon Ave, NE. 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., conference room P40-41. For more information call: (404) 885-6800 x335

Wednesday, June 14 - RuPaul, 6 p.m. Lettin' It All Hang Out - Oxford Review - Booksigning at the Oxford Bookstore 360 Pharr Road.

Friday, June 16 - Charis: books and more, 1189 Euclid Ave NE, Atlanta GA 30307 B-Boy Blues - That's right, author James Earl Hardy is in the house tonight reading from the much sought after book B-Boy Blues! This will be his first Atlanta appearance so don't miss him reading about gay black male love/relationships in the 90's. Written with humor and insightfulness. Come hear about the B-Boy Blues!

Ru Paul
"Lettin' it all hang out!"

Saturday, June 17 - OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEE HOUSE - James Earl Hardy will sign and read excerpts from B-Boy Blues at 7 p.m.

Saturday, June 17 - The second annual Lambda Family Picnic will be held from 1-5 p.m. in Scott Park in Decatur, GA. Sponsored by the Atlanta Lambda center, the picnic is a celebration of family and friends held each year during Pride. Family members are encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and play games in the park. Soft drinks will be available for purchase. For futher information contact the Atlanta Lambda Center at (404) 662-9010.

Sunday, June 18 - Venus, ZAMI, and Second Sunday co-sponsor a B-Boy Picnic at the Venus office, 616 Ormewood Ave. Meet author James earl hardy. RSVP by June 15, 622-8069.

June 20 & 21 - A special staged reading of "Conversations with a Diva", by Dr. Shirlene Holmes. Tickets $3.00, Nexus Performance Gallery. (404) 688-1970.

June 22 - July 13 - Each Thursday, 7:00 p.m. The African-American Amatuer Film society and West End Performing Arts Center presents various black films, $2.00 - public, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd; for more information: (404) 818-6444

Friday, June 30 - Marlon Riggs, BLACK IS...BLACK AIN'T film festival, Emory University, Rm. 208, White Hall, reception follows. $20.00, $10.00 students. For more information: (404) 662-9010.

Thursday, June 22 - OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEE HOUSE - The Men of 512 - Atlanta's own Tre Johnson, one of our special friends, will treat us to excerpts fom his collection entitled THE MEN OF 512! Tre and two of his friends, E. Tallashea Holand and Tony Daniels, will give us an upfront view of The Men of 512, which deals with Balck male love in the 90's.

Thursday, June 29 - OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEE HOUSE -OUR COUSINS HOUSE & AFRICAN AMERICAN OUTREACH at AID ATLANTA - Bruce Williams, Exec. Dir. of OUR COUSINS HOUSE and african american outreach will be here to talk about their organizaitons.

Sunday July, 2 - Annual July 4th Picnic in Candler Park (McClendon Ace. east of Little Fice Points) at 4 p.m. Meet by the pool. Call (404) 908-7371 for more information.

GALLERY OPENINGS

FISTAGRAPHY™

A photographic exhibit entitled "From the Soul", which shows how African-American women photograph music, opens with a reception on June 23, 1995 from 7:00 p.m. until...at M-Print Gallery located at 253 Trinity aveenue, SW in downtown Atlanta. The exhibit will hang in the gallery from June 23rd through July 21st 1995. Please call M-Print Gallery at (404) 523-4434 for more information.

ZOne III
PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP

The 54th Massachusettes, presented by Hammonds House, Sunday June 11, 2 -5 p.m. 503 Peeples St. Atlanta. Showing until August 13, 1995. (404) 752-8730

The Migration Series by legendary artist Jacob Lawrence hangs at the High Museum of Art until June 30, 1995. Free each Thursday.

Discovering *Ellis Ruley*

The works of Ellis Ruley will be presented at The High Museum of Art: Folk Art and Photography Galleries through July 22, 1995. Call (404) 522-6940

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Men of Color Against Aids, (MOCAA), hosts a wine reception for Atlanta writer E. Lynn Harris during Boston's Black Gay Pride.

Phill Wilson, policy director of the Los Angeles AIDS Project, will lead Atlanta's 25th anniversary Pride Celebration.

Tina McElroy Ansa wins the Blackboard African-American Book of the Year Award for her novel "Ugly Ways"

JUNE

Atlanta

Thursday, June 8-11, - "AFROGAL" present the first Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of Gays and Lesbians. Clarion Hotel. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

Saturday, June 10 - Hospitality Atlanta's Summer madness Party at Legion Hall near Piedmont Park. Doors open at 10 p.m., $7.00

Sunday, June 11 - Jomandi's Third Annual "Legacy Awards - featuring a tricute to big band jass master Duke Ellington and Vab Calloway, with a theatre award to Wookie King and corporate award to the AtlantaTribune. 7-9 p.m. at the Georgian Terrace. For more information, call (404) 876-6346.

Friday, June 16, - Five Girls Named MO! - A show performed by the Lesbian duo of KimPeace Harris and Shari McKoy. Their premiere will be held at the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center located at 208 W. 8th Street, NewYork City, at 8:00 pm.

Saturday, June 17 - Jomandi presents the Third Annual "Jomandi does Junteenth" Celebration of African American Independence Day at Grant Park. Performances by the BARKAYS and COOL JOE. For information, call (404) 876-6346.

Sunday, June 18 - **1 - 5 p.m.** - B-Boy Blues Bar-B-Que...Meet James Earl Hardy at the Venus office, 616 Ormewood Ave., Grant Park. Limited guest list. RSVP by June 15. (404) 622-8069.

Friday, June 23 - ATLANTA PRIDE 25TH ANNIVERSARY - From Silence to Celebration Schedule: 7-10 p.m..- An evening of Romance in the Park (Romantic Music);**7 p.m**. - Commitment Ceremony Sponsored by Atlanta Couples Together; **8 p.m**. - AIDS Vigil Sponsored by AID Atlanta at John Howell Park

Saturday, June 24 - 8 a.m. - 5K Pride Run in Grant Park Sponsored by Front-runners; **10 a.m.** - Pride Market Opens; **10 -12 a.m.** - Salute to Family (Special program targeted toward families with children featuring children's theater, clowns and puppeteers.); **12:30 - 6 p.m**. - Entertainment including comedy and music; **6 p.m.** - DYKE MARCH (Route: From Charles Allen and 10th, west on 10th to Piedmont, south on Piedmont to 8th, west on 8th to Peachtree, north on Peachtree to 14th, east on 14th returning to Piedmont Park.

Sunday, June 25 10 a.m. - Pride Market Opens (Music on stage provided by 99X until 1 p.m.

10 a.m. - Parade formation at West Peachtree and Ralph McGill (Note: This is a new location!!!) Please take MARTA to the Civic Center Marta Station as there is no parking at the formation area!!! Route: From West Peachtree, east on Ralph McGill to Peachtree, north on Peachtree to 10th, east on 10th to Charles Allen into Piedmont Park. **1 p.m.** - From Silence to Celebration: 25 Years of Pride & Protest Rally and Entertainment until 7 p.m.; **7-9:45 p.m**. - Cabaret ; **9:45 - 10 p.m.** - Atlanta Pride 25th Anniversary Finale! **BECOME A 2 HOUR VOLUNTEER! CALL (404) 622-4533 TO REGISTER!!**

Friday June 23 - Sunday June 25 - Atlanta Pride 25th Anniversary, From Silence to Celebration. THE PEOPLE OF COLOR CONTINGENT will please take MARTA to meet at W. Peachtree and Pine St., Civic Center station, at 10:30 a.m. There is no parking. "Visibility is the key to Pride '95!" Closeted? Wear your best New Orleans disguise and come join your people! Venus, Latinos en Accion, ZAMI, TRIKONE, SALGA, AALGA, Our Cousin's House, African-American Outreach AID Atlanta, Black Lesbians with Children, PBLU, Hospitality Atlanta, Sisters of 30 Something Special, AESM, Black Gay Pride, Brothers Back-2-Back.

Sunday, June 25 - Sisters of 30 Something special presents "Daisey/Dukes", a short-short, hot pantz dance. 8 p.m. - 2 a.m. Palacio Tropical Club, 2847 Buford Hwy. $7.00 (404) 350-9758.

Boston

Tuesday, June 6 - In celebration of Boston Black Lesbian and Gay Pride, enjoy a performance of Drag, Kings, Sluts, and Goddesses. Boston's Safari Club. Call (617) 267-0900 Extension 295.

Wednesday, June 7 - Boston's Black Gay Pride Presents a screening of Marlon Riggs' Films: Ethnic Notions, Anthem and Color Adjustment.

Thursday, June 8 - MOCAA (Men of Color Against AIDS) will host a wine reception and book signing featuring E. Lynn Harris, author of Invisible Life and Just As I Am. Massachusetts Ave, 6-9 p.m.

Thursday, June 8 - Sunday, June 11, - WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MA. Buses leaving New York 9:00 am Thursday, returning to New York approximately 7:00 pm. Contact ?
Saturday, June 10 - MOCAA and Boston Black Gay Pride Buffet dinner Dance. Boston's Safari Club.
Sunday, June 11 - Boston's Black Gay Pride "Family Pride Picnic" to be held at the Roxbury state Park. Call (617) 267-0900 Extension 295 for more information.

N.Y.

Thursday, June 8-11, - Simplicity Attractions of NY presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS. Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swimsuit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701
Thursday, June 15-18 - Elaine & Co.'s trip to Las vegas. 4 days, 3 nights, round trip AF & hotel. $625.00 per person. (212) 242-8610, (212) 441-3467.
Friday June 16 - Five girls Named Mo! - A show performed by the lesbian duo of Kim Peace Harris and Shari McCoy. Their premiere will be held at the Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center located at 208 W. 8th St., NY at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, June 17 - Pat & Rachel present the 4th annual "Gay Prom". Platinum Room, Burburan's Town House, 158-06 Northern Boulevard, Flushing NY $60.00. Call rachel (718) 842-2929.

D.C

Sunday,June 11 - Hot Buns Productions presents "A Quiet Storm". Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., SE, 9:00 - 2:00a.m.. dancing, entertainment, buffet, cash bar. Admission $5.00.
Saturday, June, 17 - MAWAVA's Anniversity Celebratio, Days Inn, 2700 NY Ave., NE, 10:00 - 3:00 a.m., dancing, entertainment, buffet, cash bar. Admission $15.00.
Sunday, June 18 - Marcking Productions Gay Pride Day Celebration. Bachelor's Mill. 1104 8th St. SE. 7:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar. Admission $5.00.
Sunday, June 25 - Big Will's Productions Annual Picnic. Ft. Washington Park, Ft. Washington, MD 11:00 a.m. - dark - BYOPB (bring your own picnic basket.)

JULY

Atlanta

Sarturday, July 1 - Venus and Hospitality Atlanta presents a 4th of July Women of Color Dance at the American Legion Hall near 10th and Piedmont, $7.00. Vendors call (404) 627-1630.

Los Angeles

Saturday, July 1 - ATB...At The Beach presents its 7th Annual Beach Party, $5.00. Point Dune, Malibu. 7 a.m. Hard body, sexy swimsuit, Diva contests, after party, Grand Ballroom, LA Airport Mariott. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m. $12.00.

Baltimore

Saturday, July 22 - Simplicity Attractions Unlimited presents a bus trip to Durham, NC, to celebrate the anniversary of Exclusively Esquiress. $193.00 per person. Call for info. Bobbi Moore, (301) 596-6167.

Cincinatti

July 21 - 24 - Christmas in July! Party with over 600 of the children sponsored by Kaptar's. For info, reservations call: Rachel (718) 471-1283.

AUGUST

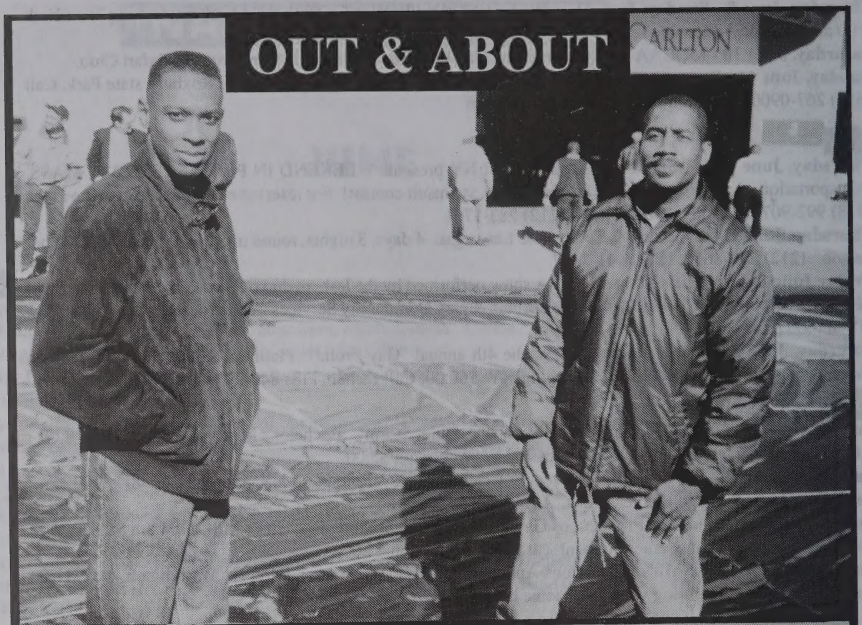
NY

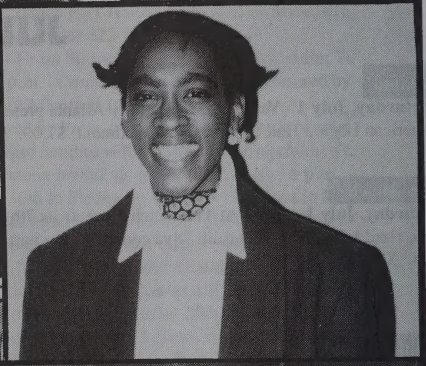
Friday, August 11-13 - Sophisticated Ladies Productions - "Cruise to Nowhere" - Contact Aquonetta Wright at (718) 562-3273 or Barbara Simon (718) 562-7712
Saturday, August 19 - Crab Fest Cruise aboard the Spirit of Baltimore. DJ, buffet, open bar, all the crabs you can eat! $80.00, contact Mini (718) 681-3746.

Baltomore

Friday, August 11-13, - Annual HINT OF HAWAII WEEKEND IN BALTIMORE MD. Buses will leave Friday morning and return Sunday evening. Contact Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167.

OUT & ABOUT





ORGANIZATIONS

Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
All Saints Metropolitan Community Church, 575 Boulevard. Sunday, 7:00 p.m., evenings, 8:30 p.m.. (404) 622-1154.
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Different Gyrl Production, PO Box 13346, Atlanta, GA 30324 (404) 908-5340
gabc - greater atlanta business coalition, 2103 N. Decatur Road, Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033 Phone (404) 377-4258 Fax (404) 37708500
Gay & Out Productions, PO Box 111, Clarkston, GA 30021-0111 Phone (404) 299-7809 Fax (404) 508-8697
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
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Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
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National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Our Cousin's House, An African-American AIDS organization. 1023 Dill Ave., Atlanta, GA 30310. (404) 756-9202.
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
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Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 524-8639
TRIKONE, An asian, gay & Lesbian organization, trikatl@mindspring.com
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (213) 953-1970
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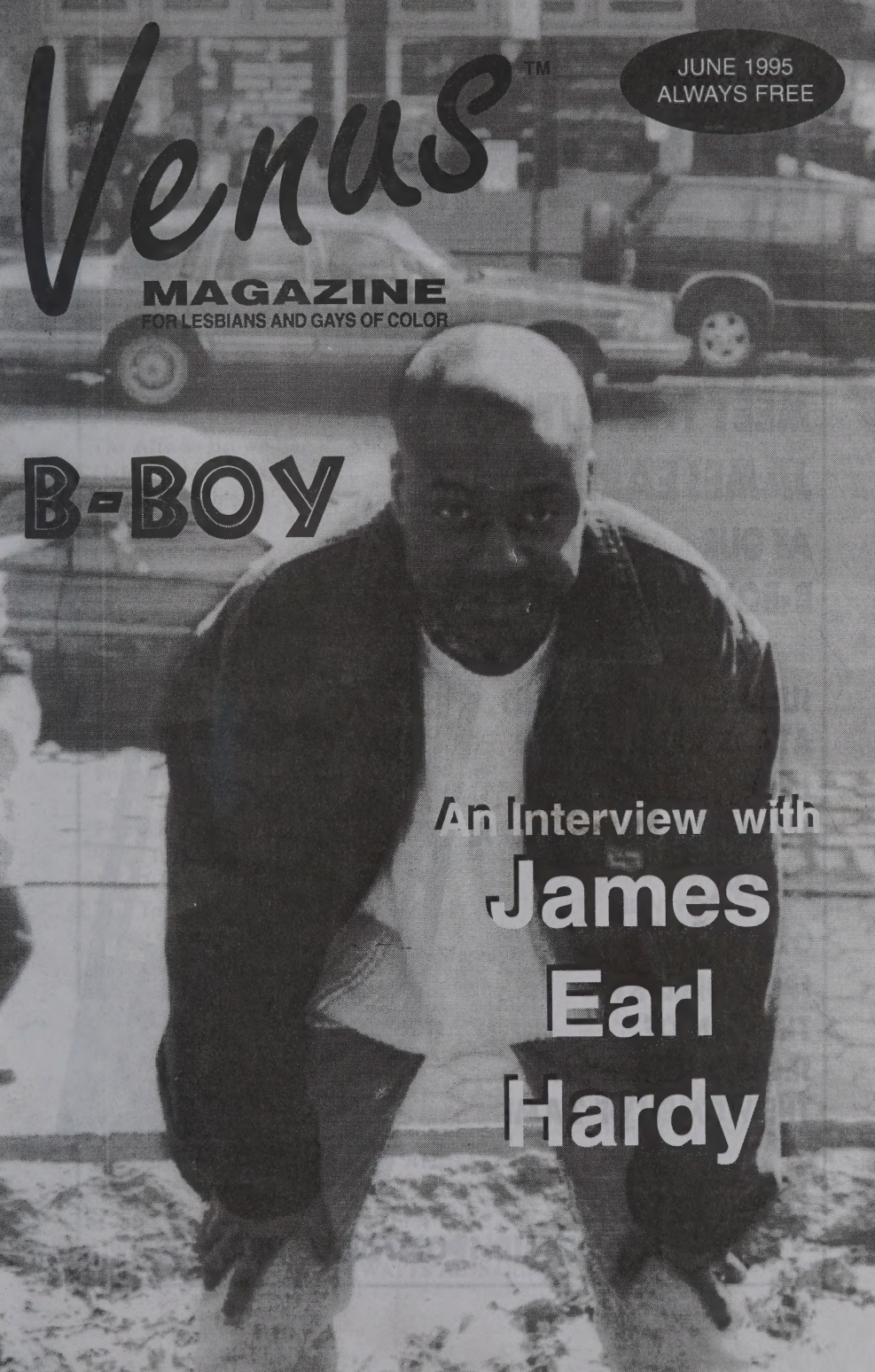

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An Interview with
James Earl Hardy

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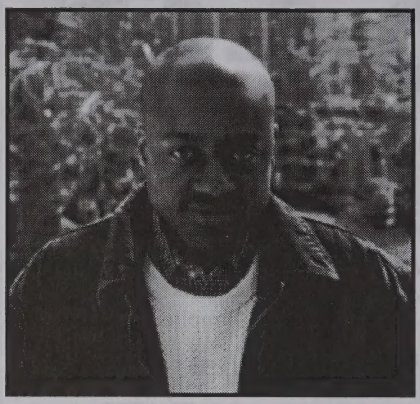
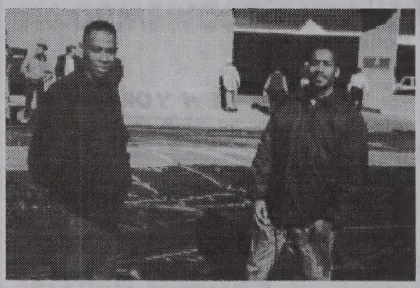


James Earl Hardy
Author of B-Boy Blues



What are you doing about Pride this year?! March with the People of Color Contingent!

Venus™

June 1995
Vol. 1 No. 6

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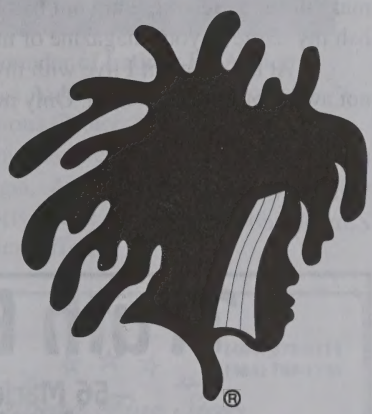

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LETTERS

Dear Madam:

I saw for the first time, your issue from a friend who received your magazine from his friend in the states and thought of writing to you.

I am interested in meeting other Black, gay guys and lesbians from your country as pen friends and communicate and I hope you could be of some assistance. I am aged 22 year old, black guy, studying to become a secondary school teacher in a small town called Mutare, in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

My hobbies are socializing, soul, African and country music, fashion designing, interior decorating, flower gardening, cooking movies and anything that makes life interesting. I am not bad looking and I would be very happy if you publish my name in your magazine or make contacts for me.

At the moment I live with my parents in a middle class suburb and they are not aware of my orientation. Only my elder sister knows and is my support.

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PROFILE OF A WOMAN

Name
Aida Rentos
Age
"Young enough to handle it"
Status
Single
Career
Activist/Entreprenuer
Hometown
"Citizen of the World"
Latest book
Out For Office
by Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund

Co-Founder of Latinos En Accion, activist Aida Rentos' latest project is "Obvious Choices", an incubator co-op for entreprenuers in Avondale Estates, Georgia. Aida feels that serving others is a priveledge and plans to run for political office.

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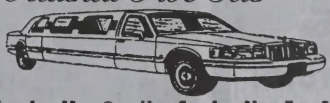

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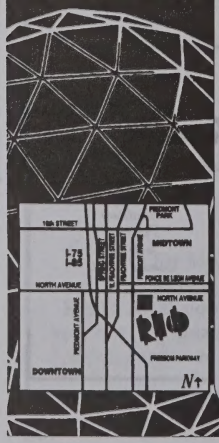

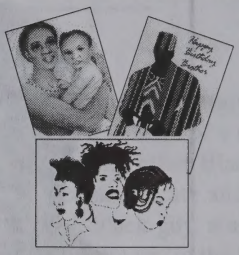

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Join Sistagraphy as we celebrate Black Music Month with a photographic exhibit entitled "From The Soul". The exhibit, which shows how African-American women photograph music, opens with a reception on June 23, 1995 from 7:00 p.m. until...at M-Print gallery located at 253 Trinity avenue, SW in downtown Atlanta. "From The Soul" will feature images from 23 African-American women photographers including such noted photographers as Jena Jones, Lynn Marshall-Linnemeier, Sue Ross, and Sheila Turner. The exhibit will hang in the gallery from June 23 through July 21, 1995. Please call M-Print Gallery at (404) 523-4434 for more information.

Mr. Batiste
from "The 54th Massachusetts" exhibit
Photo by Jena Jones

Lenny Kravitz
"From The Soul" exhibit
Photo by Sheila McAfee

In celebration of Juneteenth Day, Zone III Photographic workshop will present photographs documenting the men, women, and children who participate in Civil war reenactments as the 54th Massachusetts. The exhibition will open at Hammonds House Galleries on June 11, 1995 and continue through July 13, 1995.

Zone III, the south's largest association of Black photographers, has been documenting Civil war reenactments for the last four years, with particular focus on the reenactors who represent the 54th Massachusetts, the first documented black fighting regiment in US history. The heroic efforts of the 54th have been told throughout history in numerous forms and have been the subject of film documentaries as well as the Academy Award winning film "Glory". This exhibition at hammonds House is the first public display of images and imagery collected in vivid detail by Zone III photographers.

DYKE MARCH - 1995

Atlanta, Georgia

These women stopped traffic. Thousands of Lesbians, Gay women, Dykes, Bi-sexual women and other women who love women participated in Dyke March last year. Supportive gay men and others cheered the march on from the sidelines. It felt empowering to walk down the street with so many proud women. Dyke March 1994 filled the streets and highlighted lesbian visibility.

This year, the Dyke March honors the 25th anniversary of the Pride March by featuring two speakers with a long standing commitment to improving the lives of Lesbians and Gay men. Charlene Cothran and Pat Hussain have both made signifigant contributions to the Lesbian and Gay community. Charlene is the Founder, Publisher and Editor-in Chief of Venus Magazine. For years, she has been involved in Atlanta's African-American Lesbian community as a board member of Hospitality Atlanta. She has also been involved with the Lambda Community Center and served as a guest soloist with the Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus. Since returning to town with her partner Cherry Hussain, Atlanta native Pat Hussain has been deeply involved in Atlanta's Lesbian and Gay Community. Pat recently won the 1995 Human Rights Campaign Fund award. She serves on several boards including the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, (NGLTF), and Southerners on New Ground (SONG). Pat was the co-chair of the Olympics Out of Cobb Coalition, and a Grand Marshals of last year's Atlanta Pride celebration. In 1993, she was the keynote speaker at the African American Lesbian and Gay Alliance's Marquis D. Walker Humanitarian Award Banquet.

Please come to celebrate the contributions of these women, to celebrate Lesbian visibility, and to honor the 25th anniversary of the Atlanta Pride March.

The 1995 Atlanta Dyke March will be held Saturday, June 24. Participants should meet at the Charles Allen gate of Piedmont Park at 6:00PM.

by Brook Perry

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Racism Under the Rainbow

Part I by Charlene Cothran

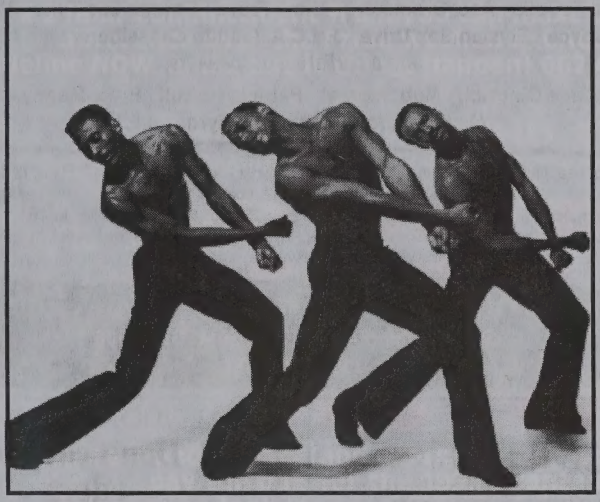
What we hope to gain by presenting this series of articles is to have African-American gay men and lesbians not be afraid or ashamed to expose any incident of racism in the larger white gay community.

It is sad but certain to say that racism is so deeply rooted in American culture that it will never end. It may take on different forms or appear more subtle in other regions of the country, but it's always there. Here in our black gay culture we must begin to address the effects of racism on our lives.

We must ask ourselves some very serious questions!! Why is it important to verbalize incidents of racism? And, as Black gay men and lesbians, who are our allies; who can we turn to for support?

The "dream" is that all gays and lesbians are walking hand and hand and singing "We Are The World" under a giant rainbow. Langston Hughes once asked "What happens to a dream deferred?" Here in Atlanta, the birth place of Dr. King's dream... deferred,...the effects of racism against black gays and lesbians has definitely festered and is running like a sore. One of the reasons why our "sore" can't heal is because we've chosen for so long to be silent about racism in gay culture, at least those who choose to be active in the "larger community." Silence, however, breeds internalized racism and self hatred. Those of us who work within the larger community are often reluctant to disturb the comfort level of white gays, especially when you're the only black person in the room, or on the board, etc. Our days of being silent must end if we intend for racism to slow it's growth. The white gay community is not "in touch" with this issue. The white gay community will never understand our walk, but let's look at what they do understand.... homophobia. When it comes to acts of homophobia, I have never seen a white gay man or lesbian fail to "cry loud and spare not." Incidents of homophobia make front page news in the white gay media. Nation wide rallies are formed almost overnight. Do you remember when everyone in the gay community, including blacks, stopped drinking orange juice because of a homophobic statement

by a Florida celebrity; when everyone stopped patronizing the Cracker Barrel because of it's homophobic policies? Well guess what folks, we've got to do the same thing, right here under the rainbow! Silence is not going to help you in the south. Do you think it's an accident that Newt Gingrich is from Georgia? Have you considered that a large part of Atlanta's White gay community would actually support him if they were straight? Have you considered that some of them silently support him now? When racism shows up, you speak up!!



One evening, after a Venus staff meeting a group of us decided to patronize a local gay bar, BURKHARTS. We entered the bar and discovered several tables occupied by gorgeous black gay men and lesbians, all buying drinks, eating, gossiping and having a good time. But one more group of blacks was more than one white patron could handle. In a voice louder that the music and chatter he screams, "We've got to turn this back into a white bar, they ain't got no money and they're suppose to know something about greens..."

I personally informed the management that a guest was drunk and should be asked to leave, before he could further insult other guests. To make a long story short, the drunk was never asked to leave. The manager simply patted on the back and whispered a few words in his ear, then strolled over to our table and blurted, "He said he's sorry.", then walked away. Naturally outraged, some of us exited the bar immediately. But, others immersed in their own internalized racism chose to stay and "just ignore him." It is suspected that the drunk is actually a silent partner at the bar. Letters were written to the bar's management asking how such an incident could happen and not be properly addressed. And what would have happened if the drunken patron was a black gay man insulting white guests? Those letters have gone unanswered to this day.

"Racism Under The Rainbow" is a three part series

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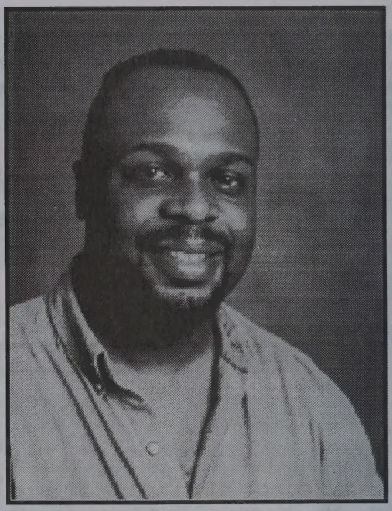
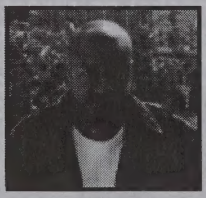
PROFILE OF A MAN

Name
Badili Jones
Age
38
Status
"Notoriously single"
Career
AIDS Educator/
Political activist
Hometown
East Orange, N.J.
Latest Book
Traitor To The Race
by Darieck Scott



Badili joined AID Atlanta earlier this year as Out Reach Coordinator for Gay men of color. He's also an active member of Latinos en Accion and Second Sunday, a discussion group for gay men of color.

MEET JAMES EARL HARDY



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See page 45 for a list of African-American AIDS organizations who need your help now.

An Interview with James Earl Hardy

by Douglas Jones

The byline of B-Boy Blues reads, "seriously sexy, fiercely funny, Black-on-Black love story. In this, his first novel, Brooklyn born author James Earl Hardy, 28, gives us a view into the world of Black gay men which is exactly that. It is an engaging and whimsical story which invites readers into the lives of the quick witted and fiery Mitchell, and his boyfriend, B-Boy extraordinaire, Raheim. As the story offers a contemporary perspective of the lives of Black gay men sans the pandering to the White gay world which permeates too many of our stories, Hardy has achieved phenomenal success, just consult the Lambda Literary List (at 25,000+ copies sold, the book holds the number two spot) or ask Hardy's publisher, Alyson Publications. And, of course, success is not without its controversy.

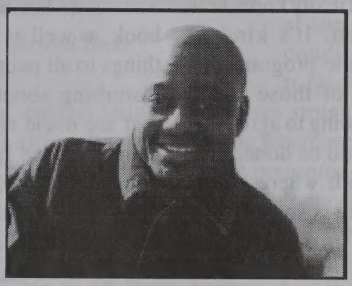

Photo by Alvin Agarrot

Venus Magazine: What inspired you to write the book?

James Earl Hardy: Simply that there was not a story which I could point to on the bookshelf that mirrored the world that I and many of the people whom I know, specifically brothers live in. So, after years of complaining about not seeing it, I decided maybe I should just write the book myself. And that's what I did.

VM: The most prevalent theme is how we as Black gay men love one another. In terms of constructing a Black gay identity, is this meant to be a step in that direction?

JEH: Well, yes, I think so. Personally, I don't think many of us really love and value ourselves for who we are as Black gay and bisexual men. It's hard to do that in a society where your life is devalued and debased and degraded every single day, not only in so-called mainstream media and images, but in the so-called Black community and the so-called lesbian and gay community. I hope that B-Boy Blues is a beginning for us as Black gay and bi-sexual men to really create images, works, and other things that really say who we are and what we are about. I hope these things will affirm us in a way that only we can really do because, quite frankly, B-Boy Blues would not have been written if I.or someone else did not come along and say that we have to stop waiting for other folks to define us. Only we can define ourselves.

VM: I hear you. You mentioned

something that I wanted to touch on: The homophobia, the racism, whether or not it's internalized, how can we as Black gay and bisexual men begin to strip those exterior layers away so that we are not hiding from ourselves, nor from each other, but rather coming to a point where we can build with one another a viable, visible community?

JEH: That's a hard question to answer because well, one thing I tell people often is that B-Boy Blues is just one story about the lives that some gay and bi-sexual men of African descent may lead and I don't believe that there is a clear cut agenda that we can put forth that all Black gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgendered people are going to embrace in order for us to overcome the 'isms' and 'phobias' that we need to overcome. We're a very diverse group of people, so I don't really know how to answer that question. It's kind of dangerous to put forth one program that will try to tackle some of those issues because not everyone is going to agree that that's the way that it should be done. That will have a lot to do with where one is geographically, where one is socially and politically, culturally, spiritually, and sexually. But one thing we all have to do and it's something that hasn't happened yet is acknowledge how all of those 'isms' and 'phobias' impact on our lives and snap out of this denial.

VM: Denial of...?

JEH: Well, I think that too many of us have become so complacent in our repression and oppression that we will not challenge the 'isms' and 'phobias' that happen around us. How many of us have actually sat in choir log or in the congregation at a church and heard a minister or a so-called brother or sister in fellowship denounce homosexuals. That is where it has to begin, it has to start at home. I guess what I'm trying to say is that we cannot expect to challenge America, society, if we have not tended to the business in our own backyard.

VM: It starts with the truth of our reality, individually

JEH: Oh, definitely.

VM: About affirming— images outwardly, Raheim is an intensely sexual person and we as a community, especially a community of Black gay men, seem to glorify that B-Boy, banji boy look. By reinforcing that are we not feeding into the objectification of ourselves and brothers as sexual monsters?

JEH: I don't see Raheim as a sexual monster. This has been put forth to me before and what I've always said is that people have the bad habit of projecting their own issues and ideologies on the work. Raheim is just one individual and neither he nor any other character in the book, as well as the book itself, can be all things to all people. The thing I find most disturbing about some of the comments that are made about Raheim is that most people reduce him to nothing but rough trade. You know, here is an individual who, throughout the course of a story, shows us that he most certainly is not. Quite frankly I don't think that there is anything wrong with Raheim being sexual because we are all sexual beings.

VM: Well, not sexual so much as intensely sexual. You know the imagery of the baggy pants, the larger than life image of being straight-up-and-down hard. And, yes, we do see Raheim's growth, but so much of his growth occurs towards the end of the book, and I wonder if this depiction intensifies the debate over Black gay men with larger-than-life penises and hotter-than-reality sexual libidos?

JEH: Well, I don't think that B-Boy Blues is going to make people believe what they don't already believe. That's the point I'm trying to make. For example, I responded to an individual's letter this past week in

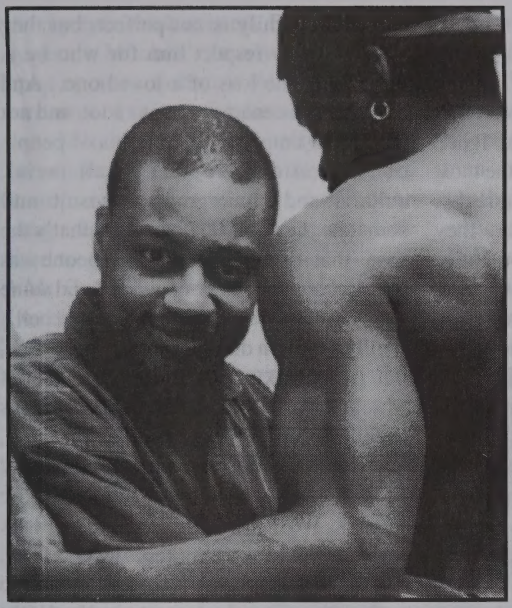

Photo by John Bernard Jones

which he accuses me of emasculating, castrating, and finally cutting Raheim down to size at the end of the book. Now, he did not say why he felt that way, but my guess, and judging from what he did say about the story, is that he was particularly disturbed that here was this big, bad B-Boy who decided that he was going to give himself to the man he loved. Quite frankly, those are the types of pathologies that we need to address: Raheim being this big, bad B-Boy, so we, unfortunately, think that there is only one way he can be: he's a real man, he's a top! he could not possibly be a bottom. Addressing specifically what you asked me, Raheim's personality, his aura, his being, is very sexual. Just because he is that way does not mean that he represents that stereotypical model. I don't think that he does.

VM: You definitely give us an image of Mitch and Raheim struggling, both inwardly, with themselves, and outwardly, with each other and the world in which they live. As Black gay and bi-sexual men trying to build community, is this giving us hope for the future?

JEH: I sincerely hope so. That is one thing which many people who have written me have said: The novel has given them hope. I've been accused of giving people a happy ending and I don't see it as such. Mitchell and Raheim may have reunited at the end of the story but they have a lot of growing to do, both as a couple and as individuals, so I really see it as a beginning. But, let's say it is a happy ending, so what! What's wrong with stories about us that allow us to be happy at the end? I think we're so conditioned to see ourselves tragically, to always seeing ourselves struggling and never coming to a point where we can be at peace that when we're presented with a story that is not so much the opposite, but has an alternative ending, we freak out. We need to realize that there's nothing wrong with being happy. And if we do think that there is something wrong with being happy then we've got a problem.

VM: There's something wrong with that. You're out there trying to offer somebody a view to freedom and they're saying, 'Oh, no, just keep me in shackles.'

JEH: Exactly.

VM: We also get a view of Raheim and Mitch struggling through their masculine and feminine issues. Besides being ultimately real in not just our relationships, but our daily lives, what was that commentary about?

JEH: I would hope that after seeing that story played out that folks would realize that it really does not make sense to play

those types of roles. We always seem to have this checklist that individuals whom we come across have to fulfill. When Mitchell and Raheim first meet each other it's obvious that they've already assigned each other a role that they both, for the most part, feel very comfortable in. But, really, who benefits from that and who are they really playing those roles for? You know, I think too often that we, as homosexuals, fall into the trap of copying the relationship behavior of heterosexuals. So, though as lesbian and gay people our answer to the popular talk show question, 'Who's the man and who's the woman?' is almost always, 'Nobody's the man and nobody's the woman,' we know that's not true because we play it out every day of our lives in the relationships that we have with people of the same sex. It's important for us to realize that we do it, but it's even more important for us to realize why we do it. I don't think most of us realize that we're not so much doing that because we want to, but because society says we have to, we're simply conditioned to think that way. When you grow up in a society where you're constantly bombarded with images of heterosexual coupling, relationships, and romance, you are naturally going to adopt those morays and values. It's important to realize that they just might not be the right thing for you.

VM: Issues of coming out: We've already stated that this is a story which is moving towards the beginning of creating community. As a community of Black lesbian and gay people we are just now trying to come out to ourselves, let alone our families. And when we do finally come out, too many of us are dismembered from our communities and our families. That being the case, is the relationship of ease and comfort between Mitch and his family a realistic and fair depiction?

JEH: I think so. Let me tell you why. Mitchell's family is not perfect, but they have come to respect him for who he is because of the loss of a loved one. And that type of scenario happens a lot, and not just in our community, in terms of people of African descent, but in all racial, cultural, and ethnic groups. It isn't until someone dies of AIDS - usually that's the case - that it's discovered that someone was gay, lesbian, bi, or transgendered and some soul searching starts. Of course, Mitchell's family situation does not exist everywhere, but it does exist. And I'm sure that if Mitchell was distant and detached from his family, folks would probably be saying, why does Hardy have to be so predictable? I was not going to endorse pathology, quite frankly. We have enough images of Black families not supporting their lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgendered members, so there was no need for me to recreate that negativity. But, I don't think his family situation is idyllic, as some people have said. His family does not, for the most part, accept him as a gay man. What they have done, instead, is try to understand him. Mind you, Mitchell, for the most part, has somewhat playful conversations with his Mother about Raheim, but his relationship with his step-father is still on edge because he is a gay man. And, quiet as it's kept, people talk about Adam, his brother, being so accepting of him, but people need to pay close attention to what Adam says about Raheim specifically.

VM: When Mitchell asks him what he thinks of Raheim, Adam says 'he's a real man.' What does he mean by that?

JEH: Adam means Raheim is just like him, and Mitchell isn't. So, on the surface while Adam loves his brother and will probably love him until the day he dies, he is still very uncomfortable with him being gay. And that connection is drawn through the presentation of Raheim as a model of so-called homosexuality which he [Adam]

did not even think existed. Really the only person in Mitchell's family who seems to open up arms to him is Aunt Ruth. I'm sure most of us know an Aunt Ruth. I don't see Mitchell's family situation as unrealistic at all. Quite frankly, we need to stop complaining when we don't see an image that presents us pathologically, we need to get out of that mode.

VM: But, I wonder about our conditioning, I wonder about our growth, I wonder if we don't talk about all the things that hurt, and get all the hurt out there how can we start to talk about the things that heal? You know what I mean?

JEH: Yeah.

VM: What sort of support have you received? I see Dr. Farajaje-Jones and E. Lynn Harris have both supported you. What other support have you received from the gay and lesbian community, other Black gay writers, or just writers and society in general?

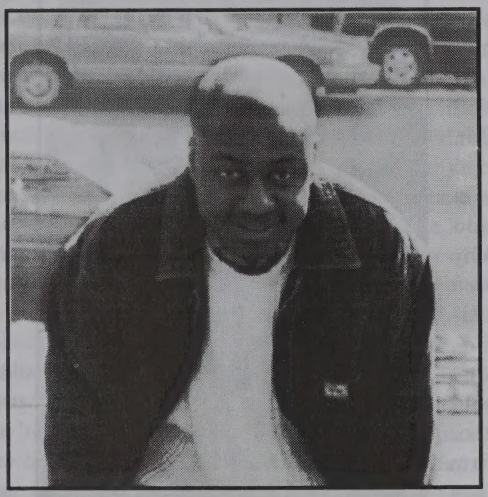

Photo by Alvin Agarrot is taken in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, NY, across from Spike Lee's Joint. This is the neighborhood that B-Boy Blues' protagonist, Mitchell Crawford, lives.

JEH: For the most part the Black gay and bi-sexual men whom I've met on the book tour have been very supportive and they basically have thanked me for telling their story. That is very profound, because when you create something as an artist, you hope that people will in some way embrace it, but you can never imagine the type of love that people will offer because of something that you have written. Nothing I have ever written has elicited the type of response that B-Boy Blues has had. I never could have been prepared for it.

VM: Well, no one else is presenting us with positive images of ourselves and saying that it's okay for us to be Black gay men and for us to, possibly, love one another. Certainly you knew that the response was going to be enormous.

JEH: Well, I expected B-Boy Blues to fulfill a hunger because, as you said, there's never been a story like this told before. But you can never predict the way people will respond to your work. I think B-Boy Blues also poses a very big challenge, particularly to us. I think it has challenged us to really look at ourselves as gay and bi-sexual men. It has forced us to really look in the mirror.

VM: Do you think we like what we see?

JEH: I don't think many of us are comfortable with the image. I have gotten some flack from folks about the story I tell, the way I tell it, some of the depictions of the characters, the ending. But often times those reactions say much more about those people than about the work. In terms of Black heterosexual folks I do have some Black heterosexual fans, overall, there's been a deafening silence from them.. Especially the Black media. I've gotten almost no coverage in the Black heterosexual media. For the Black media it has been a question

of acknowledging a 'lifestyle' with which they are not comfortable. It forces conversation about something they don't want to talk about. The White gay media doesn't understand it. For too many of the White gay and lesbian publications who have taken it upon themselves to review B-Boy Blues, there has been this very condescending, catty attitude and tone. Either they review the author, whom they do not know, because they don't like what they're reading or they review the book I did not write. In other words, "Why did Mr. Hardy have to present the story in this too Black, too strong voice? Why couldn't it have been done in a multi-cultural way? Etc., etc. It's funny that White folks would expect me, an author of color, to affirm them as White gay people and White authors have not been held to the same standard when it comes to their characterizations of people of color. But, I expected all of that. I told Alyson Publications before B-Boy Blues was released, 'Do not expect a mountain pile of clips from the White gay and lesbian press or from the Black heterosexual press to send out with B-Boy Blues, because you will not get it.' Unfortunately, it's a fact of life. We're dealing with two distinct, so-called communities that, for the most part, only want to respect and accept only one part of us. Black gay fiction in the past decade has meant stories about Black gay men that place us in a White gay world. Then, here comes B-Boy Blues which places us in the type of world that most of us live in and love in and they just can't take it. They just can't handle it. I have not been at all surprised by those responses, but I would hope that the debate that B-Boy Blues has seemed to stir in some lesbian and gay circles, and some Black circles, and some Black lesbian and gay circles, will at least encourage people to try to understand that there are different worlds out there that exist apart from their own and that in order for us to understand one another and to appreciate each other for who we are, we need to respect those differences. That's something that neither the White gay camp nor the Black heterosexual camp wants to do.

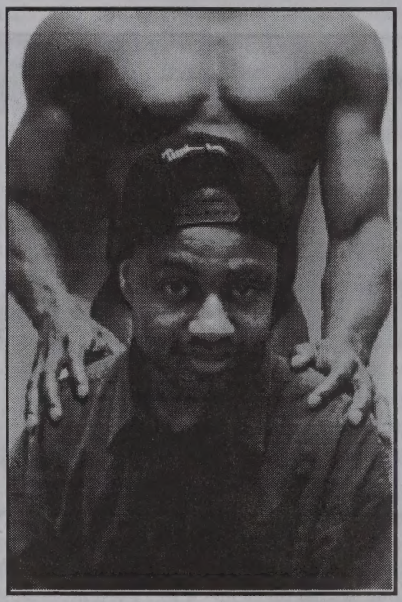

Photo by Bernard Jones

VM: It's interesting that you started speaking about that because I want you to comment on the struggle that you had bringing the book to the marketplace and then its subsequent success and how that is a direct reflection of the inability of publishers, agents, etc., to understand and accept the fact that there are realties different from what they're used to, but still entirely valuable and substantial.

JEH: Yeah, the book was turned down by some two dozen publishers and that didn't surprise me either. But, I believe that most of those publishers now realize that not

only is there a market out here for these types of stories, but that they have to change their way of thinking when it comes to the market itself. In other words, yes! Black people read. The validity of a title cannot be measured on the question of whether or not White people are going to read this book. We're talking about stories with universal themes. I just wish one of those very absent-minded, close-minded publishers would have just thought for a moment and said, 'Well, this is a love story.' The only difference here is that this is about two Black men. Many heterosexual women who have read the book told me, 'I was sixty, seventy, eighty pages into the story and it just completely slipped my mind that I was reading a story about two Black men. I could see myself in Mitchell's shoes.' I believe that our stories are very distinct because they're about us, but we're human just like everyone else. Unfortunately, the bottom line is the dollar and because some of these publishers have seen that B-Boy Blues has sold twenty-five-thousand copies in less than six months, they're definitely going to try to jump on the band wagon. 'We need to find ourselves a James Earl Hardy.' It's that Spike Lee syndrome again. I wish that the so-called White gay and lesbian community would not be so hostile and indifferent and that the so-called Black community would not be so silent.... But, I guess that's a lot to hope and wish for (chuckles).

VM: Hey, but we've been some praying people for a long time (more chuckles).

JEH: See.

VM: Those struggles, the initial reception of the book or the lack thereof, how has that dictated the need for us, as Black gay and lesbian folks, to support one another, be it in ventures such as this publishing or networking and establishing everyday connections? Again, you commented earlier on the presence of this pathology of tragedy, but there also seems to be this pathology of competition, 'I'm the only one. I'm the only one that can exist, this is all that we need to hear right here and right now.'

JEH: I'll allude to something you said earlier about wanting freedom. They're too many of us walking around in a post-traumatic slave-syndrome state. We are afraid to think for ourselves, afraid to do for ourselves. We feel that we need the affirmation and validation of White people-gay, straight, bi, or otherwise - to do or say anything for ourselves. It's a sickness and it has to be treated as a sickness. I do believe that projects like B-Boy Blues can help in the healing and make us realize that it's up to us, it's our destiny, it's our fate and only we can shape it, only we can form it, only we can make it happen.

VM: Well, in terms of writing, what are your plans for the future? Can we expect to hear more from Mitch, Raheim, and Junior?

JEH: Oh, definitely, there will be a sequel. I don't know when it's coming out, but I have begun to work on it.

VM: This has been a wonderful, wonderful conversation and I've thoroughly enjoyed it. On behalf of Venus Magazine, I'd like to thank you for your time and your example.

JEH: Thank you. It's with the support of publications like Venus that we get to reach our target audience. You guys also are making history, because every single periodical, every single book, every single poem, every letter, that we write today will help so many others tomorrow. So, we're just recording history together.

VM: Absolutely. Well, I look forward to seeing you at Charis Bookstore on June 16 and at Outwrite on June 17.

Doug Jones is a novelist from Brooklyn, NY

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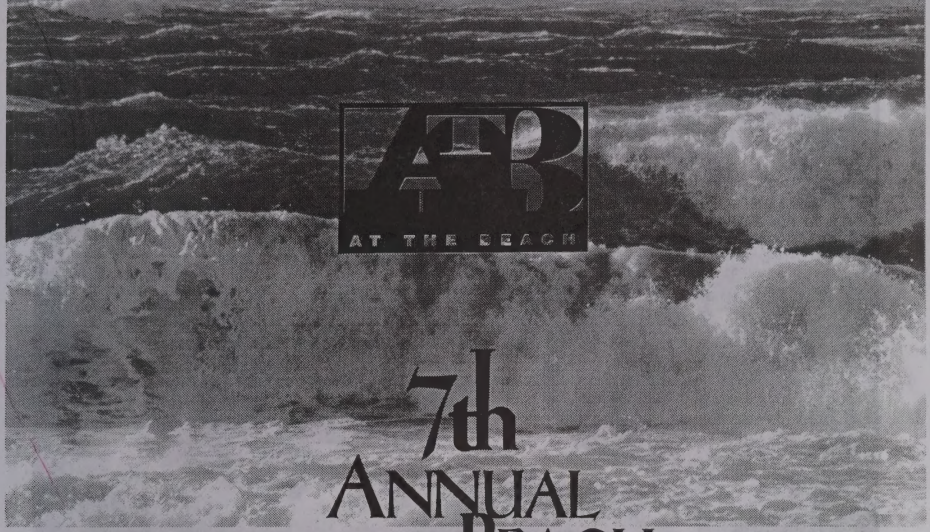

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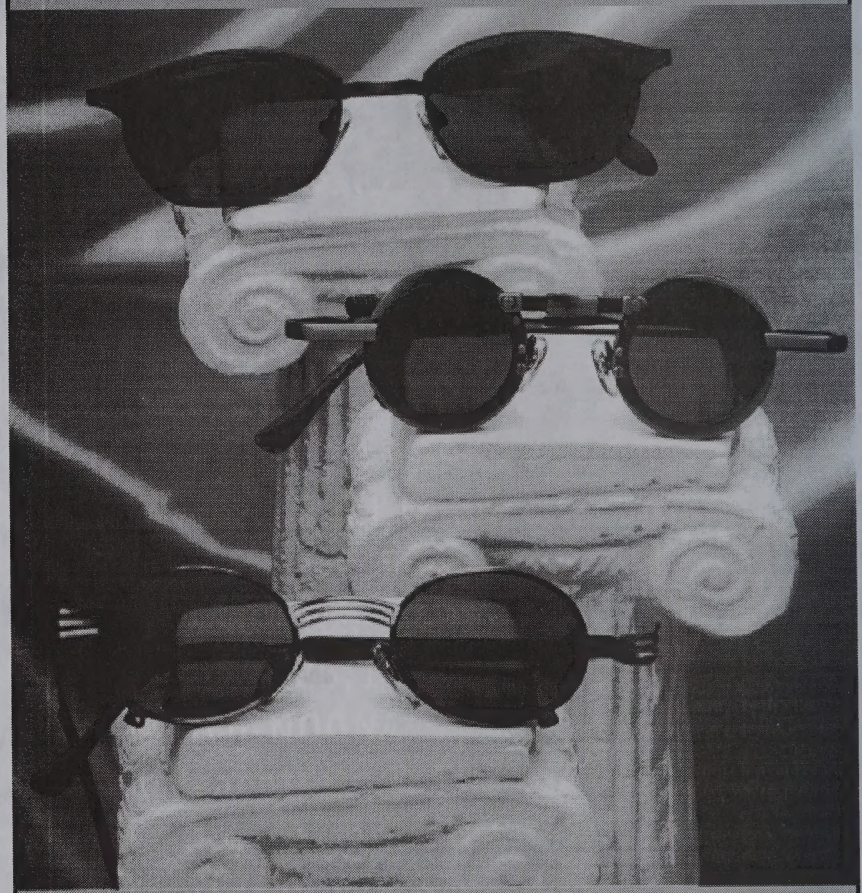

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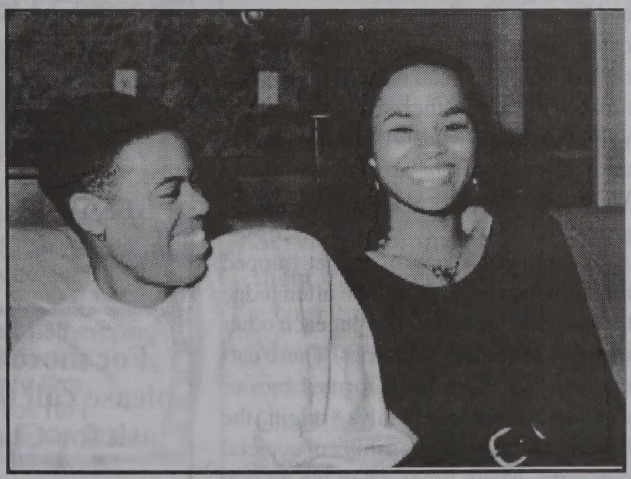
LOOKING FOR LOVE

by Carla Anderson, M.S.

Ah, summer! The time when days are longer, nights are warmer and our minds wander into flights of fancy or fantasy. Often, this is a time when we construct or renew vows to break from our winter's cocoon and find that special someone. Something in the air fills our spirits and flows over our hearts. Some of us, on the other hand, are launched into search mode.

Our intensity builds and we find ourselves initiating glances as we lounge on Atlanta's many restaurant patios. We may even gather our nerves and approach that man who's always walking his dog in the park everyday. Or that woman sipping a Cafe Mocha while reading Venus magazine. And once we have gotten their attention, then what? How do we decipher if this is who we want for just now or forever?



One initial clue is the response to your approach. Even the shy creature, if the feelings are amicable, will let you know if they are interested. A rude rebuff or total blow-off is a big signal to direct your interest elsewhere. Being a pursuer is fine however, it may be best not to pursue someone who takes great

pleasure in watching you climb obstacle after obstacle that they have thrown you way. Not being available more than all of the time, canceled dates (only to see them later while you are out), and phone calls being sporadically returned add up to more than playing hard to get. Besides, there is sure to be someone else who will fell more welcoming to you and all that you are. Buying someone's affections will only increase your debt and not your chances.

Another character that is best to be avoided while you are out and about is the "drama queen." This is the woman who overreacts to every single word or action, or the man who always has a terrible, awful, no good very bad day. Both focus a great deal of energy and delight telling you about it but do not have any room in their lives to discover who you are, your needs and wants. They may be merely looking for a spectator to their lives. After a while, that audience seat feels awfully hard on the butt.

As we make our journeys through the world and ourselves, it is very comforting to find someone whose interests and focus are similar to our own or at least compatible. For example, if you find distaste in being a social butterfly, avoid all those who are. Otherwise, resentment will soon build when "meet my friends and the bar night" rolls around or Wednesday evening softball practice begins.

Finally, many of us get trapped into looking for "a type." We often judge the book by the cover and put each other in pre-determined categories. These categories may have been formed by our experiences with our family of origin., the baggage of past relationships or societal pressures. Many times when we go out, we have our dream icon pasted in front of our eyes and we refuse to consider anyone else. Instead, allow yourself to connect with others on a wider range of levels. It is not necessary to make everyone we meet at the club, coffeehouse or gym a lover, boyfriend or girlfriend. Many of us have found that their greatest long term relationships began as friendships. Still others have discovered that their most treasured friend fits their "type" the least.

Carla Anderson is a psychotherapist practicing in Atlanta.

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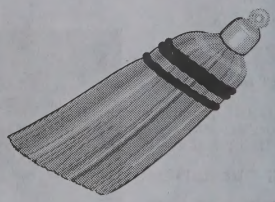

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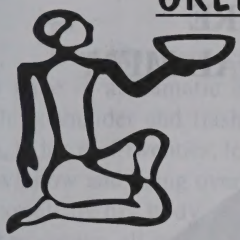
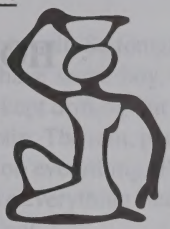
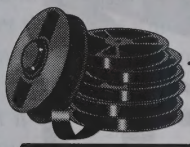




Friday, June 30, 7:30 p.m.
Rm. 208 Whitehall, Emory
Reception to follow the films
$20.00 Public
$10.00 Students
Tickets available at Brushstrokes, Charis, Outwrite
or by calling: (404) 662-9010
All proceeds will benefit Atlanta Lambda Center



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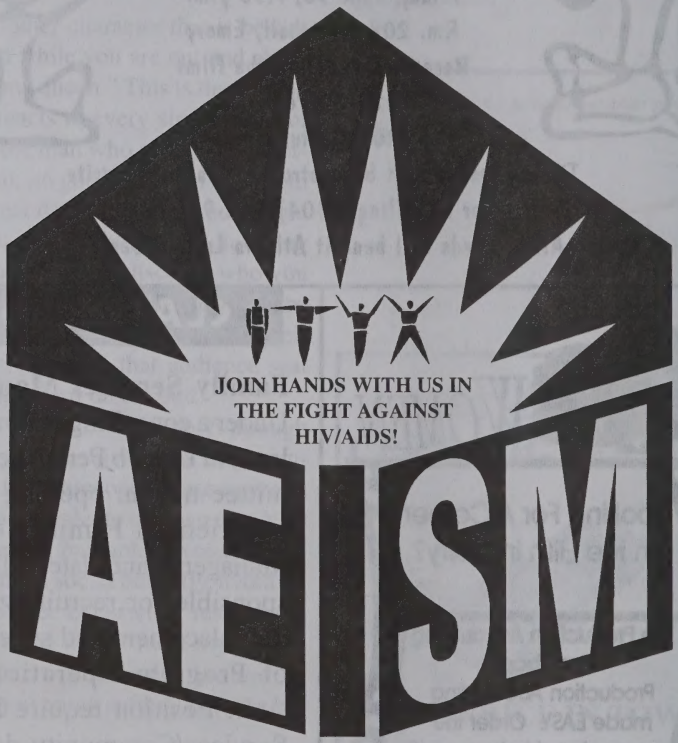

Our primary focus is gay, black men. We provide support through housing assistance, bar/club outreach, support groups, and financial assistance.

"We Love You, Love Yourself... BE SAFE..."

If you would like to volunteer, need information or make a tax deductible contribution please contact:
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P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, Georgia 30337
(404) 753-2900, (404) 753-7733

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

The rain swept across the window pane in a dramatic interludes of crashing thunder and flashing light. A man, in his mid-twenties, looking out of his window and being overwhelmed by the smell of his body trapped in the clothes strewn all over the room. Beer cans and empty dope bags lay everywhere. This room looked much like the rooms that bordered it, except perhaps in size and type of furniture. All the rooms led into a hallway that in turn led into a street that was saturated with the hopelessness of drugs, the misery of daily living, and the inability to do anything at all bout it-or so it had seemed for the past six months.

There was a constant commotion in the hall. Arguments, whisperings, conversations, and threats always filled the air. He could not believe it, but here he was living in a crack house. Silly as it sounded he liked to call it "geek house," the name he heard in a song, "can't eat, can't sleep, all you wanna do is geek, geek, geek." The song fit him and the house to a "T."

Tonight was so very different because things had begun changing. About a month ago he had developed shingles which the doctors had told him was caused by his drug usage and his sexual promiscuity. Ultimately, he knew being positive meant that he needed to begin taking better care of himself. So tonight, instead of trying to have some boy, or chase a hit, his mind kept drifting out of the window into the rain. The rain, pouring, streaming down on everything. The rain was trying to make everything clean. But he knew it could not.

He had walked the streets many nights in the rain and never did it make any difference. He knew it would not be any different for the people who moved, hustled, and got hustled under its dismal reign tonight.

He had not ever met such people before in his life, however, at this point in time he was one of them. They were the nasty, untrustworthy, and heartless. He knew this was not the case and had learned most emphatically that people were people, dressed up or naked. He felt he had probably known these creations of destruction, as children. He went to school, to church, and to the playground with them. Looking at them stand under the rain, he wondered how they and how he had made the transformation.

Transforming into things he did not want to be near and even more terrible, transforming into what he had become. He just wanted to get back. Get back to being happy, socially acceptable, purposeful, lovable and intelligent. Rather than being a faggot hidden in a room where he enticed men for sex with

dope, barely making ends meet, living in the shadow of the stigma of being HIV positive, and most dreadfully being afraid to acknowledge these things.

His mind seemed almost capable of exploding. His reasoning ability stopped reasoning. His brain picked up whatever fragments it held and threw them, much like the wind blowing the drops of rain outside his window, almost identical to the way the people outside the window were driven by their desire to escape of to find themselves.

He was not sure of either, For the longest time, he was no sure if he was searching for something or if he was running from something. The lightening flashed and the thunder followed. The noise in the hallway grew as well as the stench in his nostrils. Out of all this he found not a clue.

In almost the same instant, silence screamed at him from what seemed like a million miles away. He looked not through the window but into the window pane. A sight that was more frightening than calming. He had not wanted to look at that person 'c compulsion to see, however, picked him up to take a deeper gaze at himself in the mirror. He began to cry.

All of the years of hiding came tumbling upon his head. His mirror became a moving picture of years of self-hatred and self-loathing for being black, for being gay, for not being successful enough, for not being good enough and ultimately not being HIV negative. The HIV concluded that the other things must be true.

Then for a time all he could do was see his tears, hear his sobs, and feel his pain. It kept coming and coming and they the lightness finally returned - after so may years. The revelation followed much like the awesome misery he lived through day in and day out. "He had made it." Thought he lay in a dump in the most crime-ridden section of town and he owned nothing except all that was given to him or what he had stolen. He felt like a mangled dog that had gone into battle and lost, but he had survived. That was it in the midst of his despair he finally had been given his answer and that was the clear and present fact that he was here right nos. Whatever challenges he had coming; he could face because surely he had gone through the worst possible scenario.

The tears dwindled and a smile began to form. He felt totally weird smiling all alone. It was as if only he and God knew what the truth was, but for now that was all that mattered. He could possibly make it back through the transformation. If he could make the journey of a thousand miles in the dark, then surely as the sun would rise again, he could take a single step in the light.

A knock came to the door. "What's up," he bellowed. "It's me, Boo." It was his friend Lacey. "You alright?" she inquired. "Yeah, I'm alright, You alright, and everything is alright."

Papillon is a freelance writer living with AIDS in Atlanta.

I'm in love and I hate it. This woman who causes me to lose sleep, miss meals, and go places I don't want to be has no idea, I think.

She is hot, she's smart, she smells wonderful and she's funny. She loves to dance, she's so interesting and she is driving me crazy. She lives her life as a lesbian, she is. I live as a straight, married woman, I am not.

This situation was never planned, expected, wanted or any such animal. I am a lesbian in the closet living an outward lie. I have had affairs with women all in my same circumstance. I have not been in love since I was a teenager and because of the pain I promised myself this would never happen again. Twenty years later I am faced with this again. I am afraid to approach her about my true feelings for fear she may be interested in me beyond just the friendship we have cultivated. I would not be able to give her the commitment she surely deserves. I ache for her. She has no lover in her life now, and she's healing from a bad relationship, another reason not to make any sudden moves.

I am afraid as I stew in my own juices, some woman will come along and be the special person I want to be to her. She says she will wait for "Ms. Right" before becoming involved again. Her false admiration is working me overtime. She thinks I am so generous and open-minded. She wishes other straight people could be as accepting as I am concerning gay men and lesbians. She says "Most straight people do not even try to understand," and through all of this I am trying like hell to maintain my "trained seal," happy, straight wife, the closeness of your body is not affecting me in any way look." This is an Oscar winning performance y'all, but the actress is getting tired of the stage.

I want to be with her. This is not a relationship I would want to hide. I don't want to see her in dark places, out of town, in seclusion, that won't work with her.

I see her often and when I don't, I make a way, sometimes I feel like a stalker. She's every where I am without taking a step. I day dream of holding her and we don't even want to do night. She may be the straw that breaks the camel's back and that thought terrifies me. I operated with these fear chains for so long that it's almost comfortable. But other times like now its a bit much.

I guess destiny will answer it all. It is rough loving her as I do and not being able to tell anyone but you.

JOMANDI DOES JUNTEENTH FEATURING: THE BARKAYS AND ATLANTA'S OWN COOL JOE & THE FUNKY SOUL SYMBOLS

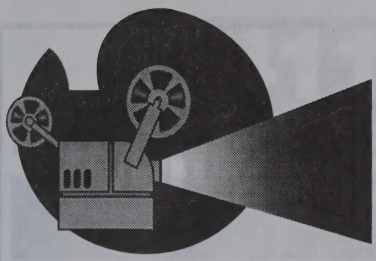
In the Beginning there was nothingness, when suddenly the Beat descended out of the boiling firmament. The Holy Forefathers - James Brown, Sly Stone & George Clinton - shaped The Beat into Flesh. As the particles of The Beat expanded and infiltrated all the corners o the earth, begetting music most divine, the people felt The Funk, and IT WAS GOOD!

photo by Sheila Turner

"Wiggle wiggle wiggle wiggle..." wail dual vocalists Ronni Gizmo and Adrienne Fishe, decked out in psychedelic threads and moving in synchronized choreography. Drummer/band leader Daryl Stewart slams out a persuasive and sinewy beat, his head nodding like a hip Buddha imparting funky knowledge. Jonathan Bond's guitar cements the foundation with the percolating keys of Ted Baskin & Bunny Wilder, While the virtuoso bass slappin' and thumpin' of Torrance Scott weaves a propulsive thread through the sonic mosaic. Sax player "E-Man" Eric Armstrong grins widely and blows, icing the cake with licks influenced by the Maceo Parker lexicon.

Shaking bodies twist and bop from the back of the room up to the edge of the stage. A variety of ethnic and racial types are represented, and there is a clear unity of purpose - LET'S TURN THIS MUTHA OUT! Both true believers & recent converts participate, representing a fact that becomes impossible to ignore with each punchy riff and solid downbeat that the band unleashes; Cool Joe & The Funky Soul Symbols are here to stay, and they will rock you world!

Formed in the late 80's by Daryl Stewart, Cool Joe quickly became one of the hardest working & most exciting bands in town, their impressive list of achievements growing along with them. A brief synopsis: the were nominated with James Brown & Ray Charles for the GA Soul Band of The Year in the 1991 New South Music Awards, they performed a tune in the HBO film Travelin' Man featuring John Lithgow, they were voted Best Dance Band of the Year in Creative Loafing's "Best of Atlanta 1993," they received the A-Town Music Award for Best Local Talent of 1994, and they've opened for every from Patti Labelle to Color Me Badd to Deee-Lite.



THE ATLANTA AFRICAN FILM SOCIETY AND WEST END PERFORMING ARTS CENTER PRESENTS "100 YEARS OF CINEMA: BLACK INDEPENDENT FILM SCREENINGS

In recognition of the 100th anniversary of cinema, a variety of films by black filmmakers from the 1960's through the 90's will be presented by the Atlanta African Film Society as part of their winning one of the 1995 Regional Designation awards in the Arts.

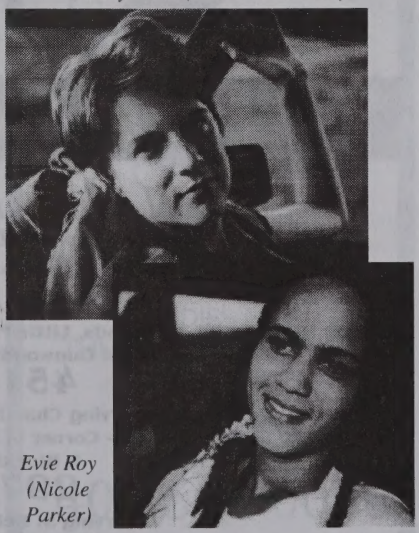
Some of the films to be presented include the classic "Hair Piece", a film for nappy headed people; "Color Adjustment", a documentary on TV and its relationship to blacks in America; and "Bush Mama, starring Barbara O, by Hale Gerimay, director of "Sankofa" and "Monday's Girls", a new short film on initiation rites of African girls, from black British filmmaker, Ngozi Onwardah, director of the films, "Body Beautiful", "And Still I rise", and "Coffee Colored Children".

Place: West End Performing Arts center, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd.
Date/Time: Thursdays at 7 p.m. June 22 - July 13, 1995
Cost: $2.00 - public, free for AAFS members
For more information call: (404) 818-6444

TWO GIRLS IN LOVE

"The Incredibly True Adventures of Two girls in Love" is a touching and comic story of first love between two girls in their senior year of high school. Randy Dean, (Laurel Holloman), a rebellious tomboy who lives with her lesbian aunt and her aunt's lover in a working class neighborhood, falls in love with Evie Roy, (Nichole Parker), a smart and beautiful African-American who is one of the most popular girls at their high school. Directed by Maria Maggenti, the film is scheduled to open June 30 in Theaters everywhere.

Randy Dean (Laurel Holloman)



Evie Roy (Nicole Parker)

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The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

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WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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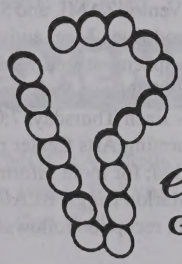

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sunday, June 4 - Meeting at Our Cousin's House, 1023 Dill Ave. SW at 4 p.m. African American participation in Pride will be discussed. Call 908-7371 for more infomation.

Tuesday June 13, 1995 - Living the Life Well, an open forum on HIV/AIDS in Atlanta's gay, bisexual & lesbian community. At Grady's Infectious Disease Center, 341 Ponce de Leon Ave, NE. 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m., conference room P40-41. For more information call: (404) 885-6800 x335

Wednesday, June 14 - RuPaul, 6 p.m. Lettin' It All Hang Out - Oxford Review - Booksigning at the Oxford Bookstore 360 Pharr Road.

Friday, June 16 - Charis: books and more, 1189 Euclid Ave NE, Atlanta GA 30307 B-Boy Blues - That's right, author James Earl Hardy is in the house tonight reading from the much sought after book B-Boy Blues! This will be his first Atlanta appearance so don't miss him reading about gay black male love/relationships in the 90's. Written with humor and insightfulness. Come hear about the B-Boy Blues!

Ru Paul
"Lettin' it all hang out!"

Saturday, June 17 - OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEE HOUSE - James Earl Hardy will sign and read excerpts from B-Boy Blues at 7 p.m.

Saturday, June 17 - The second annual Lambda Family Picnic will be held from 1-5 p.m. in Scott Park in Decatur, GA. Sponsored by the Atlanta Lambda center, the picnic is a celebration of family and friends held each year during Pride. Family members are encouraged to bring a picnic lunch and play games in the park. Soft drinks will be available for purchase. For futher information contact the Atlanta Lambda Center at (404) 662-9010.

Sunday, June 18 - Venus, ZAMI, and Second Sunday co-sponsor a B-Boy Picnic at the Venus office, 616 Ormewood Ave. Meet author James earl hardy. RSVP by June 15, 622-8069.

June 20 & 21 - A special staged reading of "Conversations with a Diva", by Dr. Shirlene Holmes. Tickets $3.00, Nexus Performance Gallery. (404) 688-1970.

June 22 - July 13 - Each Thursday, 7:00 p.m. The African-American Amatuer Film society and West End Performing Arts Center presents various black films, $2.00 - public, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd; for more information: (404) 818-6444

Friday, June 30 - Marlon Riggs, BLACK IS...BLACK AIN'T film festival, Emory University, Rm. 208, White Hall, reception follows. $20.00, $10.00 students. For more information: (404) 662-9010.

Thursday, June 22 - OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEE HOUSE - The Men of 512 - Atlanta's own Tre Johnson, one of our special friends, will treat us to excerpts fom his collection entitled THE MEN OF 512! Tre and two of his friends, E. Tallashea Holand and Tony Daniels, will give us an upfront view of The Men of 512, which deals with Balck male love in the 90's.

Thursday, June 29 - OUTWRITE BOOKSTORE & COFFEE HOUSE -OUR COUSINS HOUSE & AFRICAN AMERICAN OUTREACH at AID ATLANTA - Bruce Williams, Exec. Dir. of OUR COUSINS HOUSE and african american outreach will be here to talk about their organizaitons.

Sunday July, 2 - Annual July 4th Picnic in Candler Park (McClendon Ace. east of Little Fice Points) at 4 p.m. Meet by the pool. Call (404) 908-7371 for more information.

GALLERY OPENINGS

SISTAGRAPHY™

A photographic exhibit entitled "From the Soul", which shows how African-American women photograph music, opens with a reception on June 23, 1995 from 7:00 p.m. until...at M-Print Gallery located at 253 Trinity aveenue, SW in downtown Atlanta. The exhibit will hang in the gallery from June 23rd through July 21st 1995. Please call M-Print Gallery at (404) 523-4434 for more information.

ZOne III
PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKSHOP

The 54th Massachusettes, presented by Hammonds House, Sunday June 11, 2 -5 p.m. 503 Peeples St. Atlanta. Showing until August 13, 1995. (404) 752-8730

The Migration Series by legendary artist Jacob Lawrence hangs at the High Museum of Art until June 30, 1995. Free each Thursday.

Discovering *Ellis Ruley*

The works of Ellis Ruley will be presented at The High Museum of Art: Folk Art and Photography Galleries through July 22, 1995. Call (404) 522-6940

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Men of Color Against Aids, (MOCAA), hosts a wine reception for Atlanta writer E. Lynn Harris during Boston's Black Gay Pride.

Phill Wilson, policy director of the Los Angeles AIDS Project, will lead Atlanta's 25th anniversary Pride Celebration.

Tina McElroy Ansa wins the Blackboard African-American Book of the Year Award for her novel "Ugly Ways"

JUNE

Atlanta

Thursday, June 8-11, - "AFROGAL" present the first Annual African-American FAMILY REUNION of Gays and Lesbians. Clarion Hotel. Bonding, education, entertainment. Contact: Niesha Dupree (404) 522-4467, Bruce Wright (404) 984-2319, Keanne Fox (404) 973-1270

Saturday, June 10 - Hospitality Atlanta's Summer madness Party at Legion Hall near Piedmont Park. Doors open at 10 p.m., $7.00

Sunday, June 11 - Jomandi's Third Annual "Legacy Awards - featuring a tricute to big band jass master Duke Ellington and Vab Calloway, with a theatre award to Wookie King and corporate award to the AtlantaTribune. 7-9 p.m. at the Georgian Terrace. For more information, call (404) 876-6346.

Friday, June 16, - Five Girls Named MO! - A show performed by the Lesbian duo of KimPeace Harris and Shari McKoy. Their premiere will be held at the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center located at 208 W. 8th Street, NewYork City, at 8:00 pm.

Saturday, June 17 - Jomandi presents the Third Annual "Jomandi does Junteenth" Celebration of African American Independence Day at Grant Park. Performances by the BARKAYS and COOL JOE. For information, call (404) 876-6346.

Sunday, June 18 - 1 - 5 p.m. - B-Boy Blues Bar-B-Que...Meet James Earl Hardy at the Venus office, 616 Ormewood Ave., Grant Park. Limited guest list. RSVP by June 15. (404) 622-8069.

Friday, June 23 - ATLANTA PRIDE 25TH ANNIVERSARY - From Silence to Celebration Schedule: 7-10 p.m.- An evening of Romance in the Park (Romantic Music);**7 p.m.** - Commitment Ceremony Sponsored by Atlanta Couples Together; **8 p.m.** - AIDS Vigil Sponsored by AID Atlanta at John Howell Park

Saturday, June 24 - 8 a.m. - 5K Pride Run in Grant Park Sponsored by Front-runners; **10 a.m.** - Pride Market Opens; **10 -12 a.m.** - Salute to Family (Special program targeted toward families with children featuring children's theater, clowns and puppeteers.); **12:30 - 6 p.m.** - Entertainment including comedy and music; **6 p.m.** - DYKE MARCH (Route: From Charles Allen and 10th, west on 10th to Piedmont, south on Piedmont to 8th, west on 8th to Peachtree, north on Peachtree to 14th, east on 14th returning to Piedmont Park.

Sunday, June 25 10 a.m. - Pride Market Opens (Music on stage provided by 99X until 1 p.m.

10 a.m. - Parade formation at West Peachtree and Ralph McGill (Note: This is a new location!!!) Please take MARTA to the Civic Center Marta Station as there is no parking at the formation area!!! Route: From West Peachtree, east on Ralph McGill to Peachtree, north on Peachtree to 10th, east on 10th to Charles Allen into Piedmont Park. **1 p.m.** - From Silence to Celebration: 25 Years of Pride & Protest Rally and Entertainment until 7 p.m.; **7-9:45 p.m.** - Cabaret ; **9:45 - 10 p.m.** - Atlanta Pride 25th Anniversary Finale! **BECOME A 2 HOUR VOLUNTEER! CALL (404) 622-4533 TO REGISTER!!**

Friday June 23 - Sunday June 25 - Atlanta Pride 25th Anniversary, From Silence to Celebration. THE PEOPLE OF COLOR CONTINGENT will please take MARTA to meet at W. Peachtree and Pine St., Civic Center station, at 10:30 a.m. There is no parking. "Visibility is the key to Pride '95!" Closeted? Wear your best New Orleans disguise and come join your people! Venus, Latinos en Accion, ZAMI, TRIKONE, SALGA, AALGA, Our Cousin's House, African-American Outreach AID Atlanta, Black Lesbians with Children, PBLU, Hospitality Atlanta, Sisters of 30 Something Special, AESM, Black Gay Pride, Brothers Back-2-Back.

Sunday, June 25 - Sisters of 30 Something special presents "Daisey/Dukes", a short-short, hot pantz dance. 8 p.m. - 2 a.m. Palacio Tropical Club, 2847 Buford Hwy. $7.00 (404) 350-9758.

Boston

Tuesday, June 6 - In celebration of Boston Black Lesbian and Gay Pride, enjoy a performance of Drag, Kings, Sluts, and Goddesses. Boston's Safari Club. Call (617) 267-0900 Extension 295.

Wednesday, June 7 - Boston's Black Gay Pride Presents a screening of Marlon Riggs' Films: Ethnic Notions, Anthem and Color Adjustment.

Thursday, June 8 - MOCAA (Men of Color Against AIDS) will host a wine reception and book signing featuring E. Lynn Harris, author of Invisible Life and Just As I Am. Massachusetts Ave, 6-9 p.m.

Thursday, June 8 - Sunday, June 11, - WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MA. Buses leaving New York 9:00 am Thursday, returning to New York approximately 7:00 pm. Contact ?
Saturday, June 10 - MOCAA and Boston Black Gay Pride Buffet dinner Dance. Boston's Safari Club.
Sunday, June 11 - Boston's Black Gay Pride "Family Pride Picnic" to be held at the Roxbury state Park. Call (617) 267-0900 Extension 295 for more information.

N.Y.

Thursday, June 8-11, - Simplicity Attractions of NY presents WEEKEND IN PROVINCETOWN, MASS. Transportation, room, dinner, breakfast, pool party, swimsuit contest! For reservations contact Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073, or Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701
Thursday, June 15-18 - Elaine & Co.'s trip to Las vegas. 4 days, 3 nights, round trip AF & hotel. $625.00 per person. (212) 242-8610, (212) 441-3467.
Friday June 16 - Five girls Named Mo! - A show performed by the lesbian duo of Kim Peace Harris and Shari McCoy. Their premiere will be held at the Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center located at 208 W. 8th St., NY at 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, June 17 - Pat & Rachel present the 4th annual "Gay Prom". Platinum Room, Burburan's Town House, 158-06 Northern Boulevard, Flushing NY $60.00. Call rachel (718) 842-2929.

D.C

Sunday,June 11 - Hot Buns Productions presents "A Quiet Storm". Bachelor's Mill, 1104 8th St., SE, 9:00 - 2:00a.m.. dancing, entertainment, buffet, cash bar. Admission $5.00.
Saturday, June, 17 - MAWAVA's Anniversity Celebratio, Days Inn, 2700 NY Ave., NE, 10:00 - 3:00 a.m., dancing, entertainment, buffet, cash bar. Admission $15.00.
Sunday, June 18 - Marcking Productions Gay Pride Day Celebration. Bachelor's Mill. 1104 8th St. SE. 7:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m. Dancing, entertainment, cash bar. Admission $5.00.
Sunday, June 25 - Big Will's Productions Annual Picnic. Ft. Washington Park, Ft. Washington, MD 11:00 a.m. - dark - BYOPB (bring your own picnic basket.)

JULY

Atlanta

Sarturday, July 1 - Venus and Hospitality Atlanta presents a 4th of July Women of Color Dance at the American Legion Hall near 10th and Piedmont, $7.00. Vendors call (404) 627-1630.

Los Angeles

Saturday, July 1 - ATB...At The Beach presents its 7th Annual Beach Party, $5.00. Point Dune, Malibu. 7 a.m. Hard body, sexy swimsuit, Diva contests, after party, Grand Ballroom, LA Airport Mariott. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m. $12.00.

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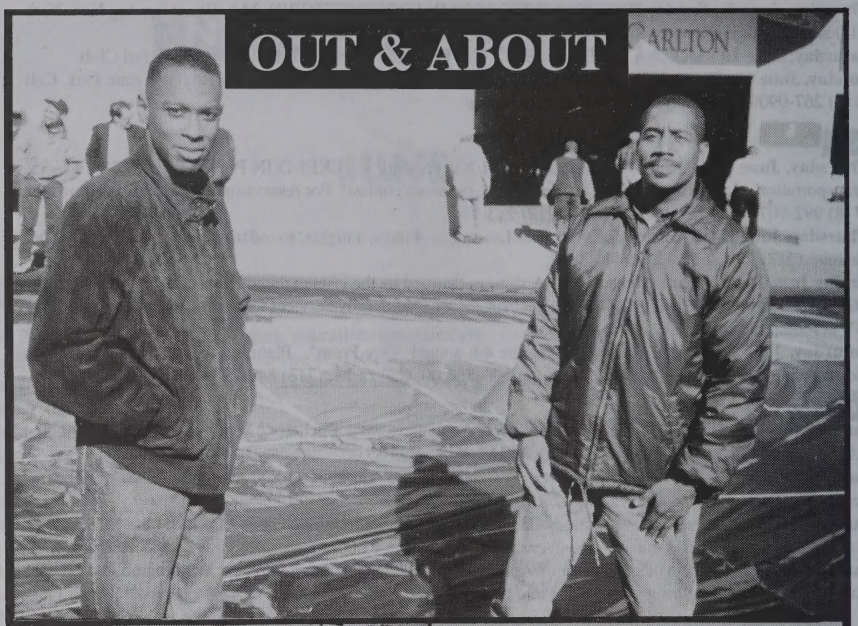
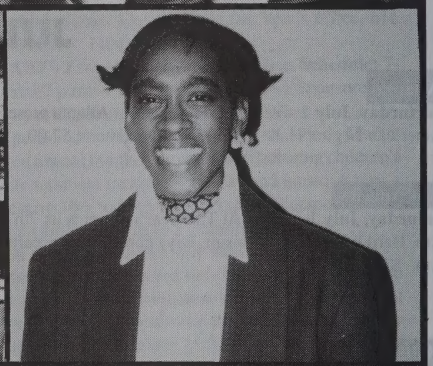
OUT & ABOUT





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Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM, (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
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AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
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Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
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gabc - greater atlanta business coalition, 2103 N. Decatur Road, Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033 Phone (404) 377-4258 Fax (404) 37708500
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C. Page

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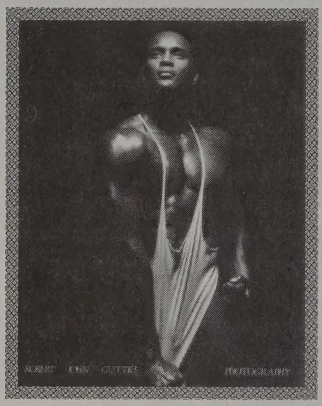

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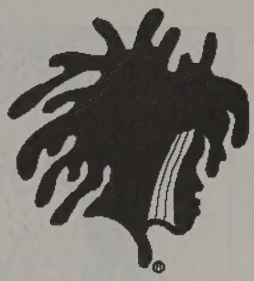

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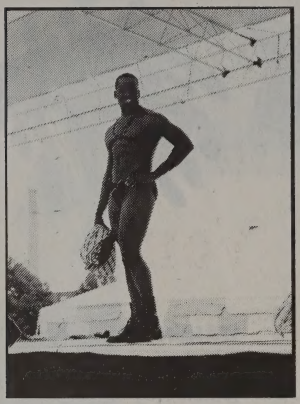

Ron Singleton

D.C.'s Black Gay Pride '95

KES

Brook Perry at
Atlanta's Dyke March

Ron Singleton

At The Beach!

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Venus™

July 1995
Vol. 1 No. 6

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LETTERS

Brothers & Sisters,

Just wanted to publicly thank you all for making my visit to Atlanta a "jood" one. Special "shout outs" go to: Doug Jones, for opening up his home to me and keeping me in stitches; Marlon, Carlos, Badili, Kevin, Ulster, Mark and Patrick (the bold and beautiful one), for the great conversation and company; Philip and Outwrite Bookstore for their professionalism and hospitality; David-Michael, "the cutie with the camera", for capturing the Outwrite reading on film (can't wait to see the photos); the talented Thomas Bevel for that phat "B-Boy Blues" cast drawing (I'm still smiling over it, thanks for bringing the story to life); all the readers for their insight and inspiration; Charlene Cothran and the Venus staff for profiling me and for hosting the Sunday Barbeque. In spite of the rumormongers and the crafty, childish behavior of some, it was really one of the best dates on my tour so far. We must do it again.

Peace & God Bless,
James Earl Hardy

P.S.: Little Bit, Dooquie & Junior thank you, too...and vow to return soon.

Editor,

Yes! Yes! Was my happy delight, after reading "Racism Under The Rainbow", by Charlene Cothran. To read someone else who understands "silence really does equal death." Thank you C. Cothran for sharing your feelings and some of ours which may not be spoken, but always felt.

"How can we get past the ignorance if we don't talk to each other?"
Representative Cynthia McKinney, (D. GA)

From the Desk of Hermes Bushong

Dear Venus Magazine,

I'm new to Atlanta and I have found your magazine to be a viable and uplifting connection to the African-American gay and lesbian community. I'm writing because I'm interested in finding out if someone can suggest good productive places and organizations other than nightclubs and/or bars to connect with my brothers and sisters in the gay community. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated!

Thank you
Edgar McGowan

PROFILE OF A WOMAN

Name:
Jena P. Jones
Age:
35 to those who know her
(ageless to those who don't!)
Status:
Single
Career:
Photographer, etc., etc., etc.
Hometown:
Atlanta, Georgia
Latest Book:
"Lights, Science, Magic"

Photo by Robert Rostick

Jena is the current Executive Director of Zone III Photographic Workshop, Inc., an organization dedicated to developing and presenting more positive images of African-Americans created by African-Americans. She is also a member of Sistagraphy™, an Atlanta based group of African-American women photographers. Jena's work can be seen in both organizations' group exhibits currently on display at Atlanta's Hammonds House and M-Print Galleries repectively.

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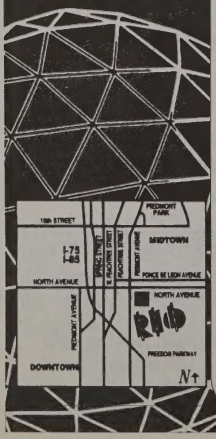

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ARTS

THEATRE TROUPE FORMING IN ATLANTA

by AJ

The executive director of the most successful African-American Lesbian theatre company in New York City will be in Atlanta in August seeking new talent. Sonya M. Hemphill, the founder of Think It's Not When It Is, Inc., (TINWII), will be conducting theatre workshops that will lead to the creation of a TINWII theatre troupe in Atlanta. "I am impressed with the women of Atlanta," said Miss Hemphill. They have intelligence, drive and talent. It's the perfect place to develop new writers and actresses."

Ms. Hemphill's company, "Think It's Not When It Is, Inc.", is based in New York City and was founded in 1990. It is a prominent theatre company dedicated to promoting positive lesbian and gay imagery in the media. Currently, Ms. Hemphill is very frustrated and disappointed with the representation of lesbians in the media. "How we are seen," she told me, "is how we are believed to be. Presently, we are not seen in a positive light. TINWII travels all over the country to teach and change that perception. Think It's Not When It Is, Inc. is providing lesbian actresses with the opportunity to depict positive lesbian characters. We must give voice to our experiences, so that others can learn. That is our mission." For mor information call 404-395-6144.

"Sensuality", Ms. Hemphill's first play, was featured in Atlanta in February. "Sensuality" has astounded audiences in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and San Francisco. They will be opening in Philadelphia in August, North Carolina and Detroit in September and Iowa in October.

SECOND SUNDAY DISCUSSION GROUP MEETS ZAMI

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up in mine, let us work together."
Lilla Watson

by Dream Gomez

When the possibility of a gathering with Second Sunday was mentioned, I think the women of Zami were intrigued by the idea. Personally, it had not occurred to me that black gay men would form the same type of support group that the women of Zami had. When I found out the number of gay black men who routinely attended the Second Sunday meetings, I was surprised. I had been saying to myself, I think, "Yes, there are gay black men; as long as they don't bother me, I won't bother them. It is an attitude that I would not have challenged in myself if not for this group meeting.

The steering committees of both groups had met to determine a list of topics that might be discussed. The topics that were finally chosen to discuss in the group were the following: Sex roles for lesbians (top and bottom)?; Does age and class determine top and bottom?; When gay black men have female friends, why do the women tend to be the glamour-type?; and finally, What are the misconceptions and stereotypes that we have about each other? Both lists included even more, equally compelling questions, some of them a bit silly, but all of them attempts to get to know each other better.

I attended the meeting a little ashamed that there would be no male face there that I knew personally; yet, I was hopeful that I might make the acquaintance of someone I could get to know.

I was off to a bad start by coming late. But my girlfriend and I were welcomed into a small group that consisted of about 15 men and two other women.

The groups were discussing the misconceptions and stereotypes that we, as lesbians and gay men, have about each other. It took a moment for me to get into the feel of the group. I did get the sense, right away, that every one was earnestly determined to approach the subject seriously and thankfully, humorously. I wish I could recount here who said what, when and where. I can't. Chalk it up to time and failing memory. I can, however tell you of one statement that was made and the response to it.

As we continued into the conversation about misconceptions, some one said "We are not all drag queens!" A brother responded to that by saying " No, we are not all drag queens, but we drag queens are here; we are a part of this conversation. We are not off somewhere in the distance." He was exactly right.

This statement impressed me the most because it answered my own attitude about gay black men. They are not "off somewhere, in the distance". They are here. Doing the same things that we lesbians are doing: hiding and not hiding; raising children; buying houses; holding jobs; making friends; making love; living.

There is a lot to be gained by getting to know which problems might be particular to being a gay black men or being a lesbian, and which problems we might share. It is important to keep the dialogue going. It is important to come together for our liberation.

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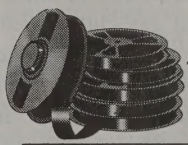

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Racism Under the Rainbow

by Douglas E. Jones

Part II

In case you missed the riot in L.A., knodded through the beatings in Bensonhurst, finessed around the fiasco over Freaknik (a.k.a. the Freedom Fest), ignored the outraged exit of white patrons from a local gay club turned too colored to be comfortable, or watched as that brother or sister was hassled for just one more piece of photo I.D. at the door of another, I am here to tell you that America has a serious race problem. It is a malignant tumor eating away at the very fabric of our existence and the gay and lesbian community is just a microcosm of the whole.

As African Americans we have contributed to every facet of the development of this country. African American lives have been expended abroad in the fight to save pure, white American democracy, only for other African Americans to return to find that the sacrifice of a black life is simply not enough for an entire race of people to be deemed equal to one white life.

It is not acceptable for white folks to continue shrugging their shoulders and feigning ignorance when presented with the spectre of racism. White Americans do so at the potential risk of considerable bloodshed. Black America is frustrated at the continued marginalization of our existence, of our experiences, of the worth and meaning of our lives. Not only am I bewildered over the sheer ignorance of white America in its continued refusal to acknowledge this serious and dire problem of race, I am confused as to why white Americans are not making strides to become more inclusive in their sharing of power and privilege.

In Atlanta, a city which is seventy percent Black, it is interesting to note that economic and political power is still largely the domain of whites. However, let me not place all of the blame for this problem of race on the ignorance and shortsightedness of white folks. As African American folks, we have a responsibility to point out all instances of injustice and prejudice occurring because of

this problem of race.

Brothers and sisters, do not buckle under the weight of oppression and your own internalized racism. Recognize it for the negative, restrictive, limiting force it is and cast it out. Force yourselves to challenge implied limitations set by the insecurities of others. Indeed, there was great tragedy in that night at Burkharts (described in part one of this series), as some slovenly drunk let his liquor get the best of him. There was greater tragedy in the indifferent dismissal rendered by the management as they ignored the requests of Charlene to ask the drunkard to leave. But the greatest tragedy lay in the cowardly avoidance of the incident by those brothers and sisters who sat silently in their attempt to "just ignore him," and who continue to patronize that establishment as it continues in its silence of the situation, as though the incident never happened.

Brothers and sisters, we must learn to demand respect, to expect respect, in the places we choose to socialize and spend our money. Demand it, command it even, and if it is not forthcoming, leave and spend your money elsewhere.

Better yet, start your own place in which to socialize and spend your money. In this day and age, much different from the limited opportunities and resources our Ancestors faced in the sixties and look at how much they accomplished!! Anything less is unacceptable. Economic empowerment is a vital reality in this country where so much is determined by the dollar bill.

I am no longer interested in this never ending 'debate' about the presence of racism: The evidence exists and the conversations exhaust me and the lack of progress wears me down. If white America will not heed the words of those of us trying in earnest to dress and heal the festering wound of racism in this country, let them suffer the follies of their ignorance. As African American lesbian and gay folk, our responsibility must be in creating a community for ourselves, capable of sustaining our social, financial, and spiritual wants, needs, and aspirations. The time is past due for us to start those conversations which will bring about the action necessary to sustain the daily realities of those of us living under the multiple threats of homophobia, racism, and, for lesbians, sexism. And, lest any of us are confused, I am talking about the collective us be 'us' black or white, gay or non gay, man or woman because, potentially, we are each participants in one another's realities.

I am reminded of the great James Baldwin's words in The Fire Next Time, "If we and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in a song by a slave, is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!"

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HEALTH

LESBIAN HEALTH: BREAST CANCER

by Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph.D.

Breast Cancer is the most common non-skin cancer among women in the United States and several other Western countries. Increase public concern has given this disease considerable media attention. According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 182,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will occur in 1995 among women and about 1,400 new cases among men. The National Cancer Institute reports that with the exception of lung cancer, breast cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer in women. Clinical trials have supported the need for early detection and intervention on all levels. Data generated in noted trials regarding the use of mammography validate their use as a necessary intervention to help save lives from breast cancer. These facts alone make breast cancer an important issue for women, their partners, family members, friends and health care providers.

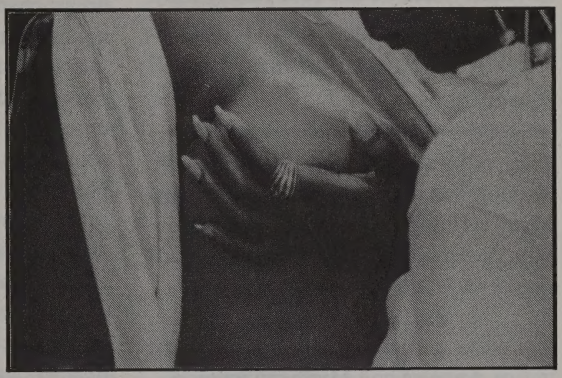

Photo by Sheila Robinson

Preliminary data for 1992 suggest that mortality (death) is falling among White women, however, this is not the case for African-American women. It is postulated that African-American women are diagnosed in later stages. This maybe due to African-American women not seeking clinical breast examination and / or recommended mammography screening. There appear to be a number of factors that contribute to a higher incidence of breast cancer among African-American women. Specific to lesbians, breast cancer rates in the United States have generated concern according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, D.C. For the purpose of this article, the word lesbian will be used to reference women whose emotional,

social and sexual relationships are primarily with other women, regardless of their public identity. Some lesbians feel sexual identity in and of itself has been a major barrier to seeking and receiving health care in the United States.

Currently, many lesbians find it difficult to "come out" to health care providers about their sexuality, hence are less likely than heterosexuals to seek and maintain routine medical physicals and screening.

Thus, fear about health care provider reaction is a major concern for lesbians when deciding to seek medical attention. This has major implications on breast cancer rates among lesbians.

In addition, breast cancer risk factors prevalent among lesbians surveyed in Los Angeles and Michigan include:

1) higher incidence of nuliparity (never bearing children)
2) possible higher incidence of delayed childbearing
3) increased alcohol consumption
4) increase cigarette use (associ ated with increased breast cancer mortality)
5) less likely to perform regular breast self-exam

A current document entitled " "Breast and Cervical Cancer Among Lesbians and Women Who Partner with Women: Information and Resources" states that the majority of women diagnosed have no identified risk other than age — making regular screening and early detection, along with treatment important for all women. Lesbians must ask their provider about signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer and determine screening routine based on family history, sexuality, lifestyle and current health status.

Traditional signs and symptoms of breast cancer include abnormal signs of cancerous growth on a mammogram; breast changes (such as a lump, thickening, swelling, dimpling, skin irritation, distortion, retraction, scaliness, pain, tenderness of the nipple, or nipple discharge). These signs and symptoms should be brought to the attention of a physician. The absence of these symptoms does not mean routine screening should be abandon. The American Cancer Society warns that since adult women may not be able to alter their personal risk factors greatly, the best current opportunity to detect breast cancer is through early detection.

Early detection has meant many things to many people. Considerable controversy around when mammography screening should take place has gained media attention and rightfully so. The American Cancer Society recommends that asymptomatics, (having no signs or symptoms), should have a mammogram every 1-2 years; women age 50 and over should have a mammograpm every year. In addition, a clinical physical examination of the breast is recommended every three years for women 20 to 40, and every year for those over 40.

Mammography is recognized as a valuable diagnostic technique for women who have findings suggestive of breast cancer. When a woman has a suspicious lump, mammography can help determine if there are other lesions too small

to be felt in the same or opposite breast. Since a small percentage of breast cancers may not be seen on a mammogram, all suspicious lumps should be biopsied for a definitive diagnosis, even when current or recent mammography findings are described as normal.

ACS also recommends monthly breast self-examination as a routine good health habit for women 20 years or older. This will give women an opportunity to become both familiar and comfortable examining their breasts. Breast self-examination should be performed every month at the same time. You may want to chose an important date (e.g., birthday, graduation day, anniversary, etc.) to perform breast self-exmaination monthly. A buddy approach has also been suggested with regard to monthly self-examination to help ensure consistnet practice.

Remember, self-breast examination alone can not replace either mammography and clinical breast examination by a trained health care provider.

Survival rates for breast cancer have improved greatly over the last ten years due largely to early detection and advances in medical treatment. Treatment options are determined based on the patient's preferences and medical advice given by health care providers. Treatment may require lumpectomy, (local removal of the tumor), mastectomy, (surgical removal of the breast), radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or hormone manipulation therapy. It is not uncommon to have one or more of these options utilized in combination. A major concern among women regardless of sexuality has been the appearance of the breast after surgery. Hence, reconstruction and cosmetic restoration options have become a very critical part of the treatment process.

Finally, like any other disease, support from family, friends and health care providers are very important in the recovery and life-long process of survivorship. Survivorship is just a s important as treatment. According to the American Cancer Society, "Current data indicate that 63% of women diagnosed with breat cancer survive 10 years and 56% survive 15 years or more". Relevant to these figures is the underlining fact that early detection, clinical diagnosis, quality treatment and support from partner, family, friends and health care provider help increase quality of life and years of survivorship.

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A GRANDMOTHER'S LOVE

I could tell you that I am a forty year old grandmother who tested positive for the HIV virus in December 1991, or I could tell you that I love my only child who is 21 and both of my grandchildren ages two and four. I could talk about how important they are to me and they are...but that's not what I want to talk about.

I want to talk about a young woman who I love very much. Her name is Stephanie and I call her young because, unlike me, she has never experienced life. When I met Stephanie I didn't like her very much. She was a school teacher from Chicago who, because she had went to all white schools, including college, never had any black friends and, Horror of Horrors, ...she was a virgin at thirty-five. Her mother was still living at the time and she hated me on sight, but then she hated anyone who seemed to be a threat to her control of her only child. We met through a mutual friend and when our friend died in September of '91 from cancer, I left New York heartbroken and went to see my only link to the person who had been my only friend. We stopped our mutual dislike for one another and became friends. She even went with me to hold my hand when I went for testing, assuring me that I would be negative. For two weeks I agreed with her, but inside I knew. You just couldn't live as I had prior to 1986 and expect not to have "the package". From March '86 through December '91 I had been totally celibate. No sex, no drugs, no drinking or smoking.

On January 11, 1992 my test came back positive. That night Stephanie and I became lovers. It wasn't until my doctor told me that I had an STD, that I carried it around since 1986 and had passed on to Stephanie, that I began to worry. The fear of dying was past, the fear of killing someone was not, and still is not.

I couldn't live with knowing that someone I loved so very much would die because of me. At the time she didn't care because her mother had passed and I was all she had. Whenever I would caution her or tell her that she might want to marry and raise a family, she would always say, "I'll never marry anyone but you, and when you die, so will I." I wanted her to live and so I ended our relationship. I'm in Savannah and she's in Chicago with a new husband (who hates my guts) and gets tested every six months. On the 13 of May, I received a letter from her stating that she's finally ready to let go. Now the selfish part of me says, "YOU CAN'T, NOT NOW!", but the part that loves her says, "Good-bye Baby, have a long and healthy life." Unlike many other lesbians, I choose to acknowledge the truth of HIV transmission through female to female sex.

Due to the myth that we are God's Chosen, and cannot transmit the virus of AIDS to our partners, we too are now facing a shorter life span. HEY LADIES! Wake up and smell the coffee! Very few women are going to tell you BEFORE bedding you that they have tested positive! The stigma still exists! If you or your partner has ever had an STD, and neither of you sleep with males, (or even if you do), allow common sense to prevail. HIV and AIDS are also sexually transmitted diseases like "Clap" and "Syph". So unless you are like the majority of teens in this nation...do something about saving your life, and the life of your partner(s).

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SPIRITUALITY

"WHEN ALL HEAVEN BREAKS LOOSE"

by Kamau Ifoma

A friend shared an experience with me recently, it goes something like this. He was visiting a church in suburban Atlanta. The service opened with the traditional prayers and announcements. The visitors were acknowledged. And then the choir came up and sang. And oh boy did they "sang". By this time the energy was high and all heaven was breaking loose. Now it was the ministers time. With the Spirit high and energy flowing he got up and began to deliver his message. For whatever reason this was the day that he decided to do his "gay bashing" sermon. Now, just as he really began to get into it the cover to the piano slammed down. The Choir Director stood up and declared, "There will be no more music today." He then proceeded to exit the sanctuary. Not only did he leave, the entire tenor section of the choir marched right behind him. As they all were filing through the door one of the matured sisters of the church stood up, looked at the minister, with finger pointing and head rocking she said, "See dare you done hurt those boys feelins!" Upon hearing this story I cheered with the greatest of joy. The good sistah made a choice to join the choir director and the tenor section by standing for the truth as they know it to be. They determined that they did not have to accept someone else's teaching and they let it be known.Around the world, Sunday after Sunday, the "gay/lesbian bashing sermon" is delivered with the greatest of ease. In my opinion the sermon itself is not the crime, the true crime is that so many gays and lesbians allow themselves to just sit and listen. Embarrassed, hoping nobody suspects them. And just wanting the minister to hurry up and let it be over. It's not like any of us are forced to attend any particular place of worship. Or that we are shackled to the seat once we get there. At least not literally. And yet we say amen in all the right places, scream and shout with the best of them and thank the minister for the slap in the face as we are leaving.

Photo by Ron Singleton

"But Kamau, my making a stand isn't going to change anything OR It's really nobody's business what I do in my bedroom." These are responses that I get from many when this subject comes up. Now I firmly believe that everyone has the opportunity to discover their own truth, within the quietness of their own soul. I am also aware of the world that we live in where we have been taught to give this responsibility to mediators. Someone who has been trained or ordained to know more or better than we do. Someone whom we have been told has a closer connection to the God within us than we do. If it is your choice to allow someone else to decide what you believe, does it make good sense to also give them license to Spiritually, mentally/emotionally or physically beat you up?

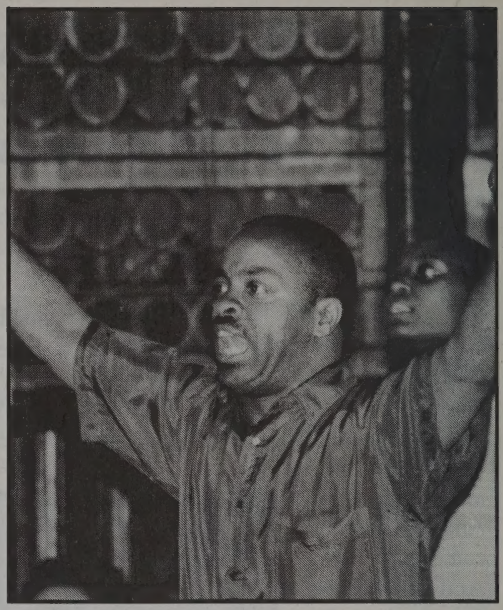

Photo by Ron Singleton

Another acquaintance allowed me to read a letter that he had written to one of our more "prominent" ministers in the Atlanta area. He was visiting the church with a friend on a Sunday when they had a guest speaker. Well, the guest speaker decided to use this platform as an opportunity to do the same abomination sermon. In my friends disgust he did not walk out of the church, instead he decided to write a letter to the minister. In the letter he very eloquently explained his disappointment in the guest minister being allowed to teach this message. Especially when there is such a large gay/lesbian participation in the church. He also pointed out how theologically and historically incorrect the guest minister had been in his teaching. You see, my friend is also an educated, ordained minister. He made a decision to let it be known that he does not accept this teaching. He was not as comfortable as the choir director and his tenors section in expressing his position in front of the entire congregation. And still he stood for his truth in a way that was comfortable for him.

There is an old saying that says, "if you believe you are a sinner, damned to hell ...you are." The essence of this statement is that when you believe that you are Divine, blessed to an eternity of bliss ...you are. I do not wish to give much credit to the lessons of those who choose to teach the abomination theories. On the contrary, I bless them and give thanks for all that they are as a physical expression in this Divine world. They have just as much of an opportunity to decide what their truth is as we do.

In her new book, "Transform Your Life", Atlanta minister Dr. Barbara King says that we should stop spending

so much time questioning "why me lord" and begin declaring "Try Me Lord!" I constantly ask the God of my being to "Reveal your truth to me in a way that I can understand and use it for the betterment of myself and all the world. Direct me in my Spiritual unfoldment so that I can feel comfortable in all that I am." You see I believe that everyone has a direct connection with the Divine Creator. It doesn't take that mediator for us to receive the "Word of Spirit." Believe me your creator speaks directly to you. It never made sense to me that God would tell someone else what is best for me when God, in Its Omnipotence (all Power), could speak it directly to me. Once I learned to get still (with my emotions and disbeliefs) and go directly to the Source, God's ever presence revealed Itself/Himself/Herself to me.

The more you practice your connection with Divine Oneness the more often the answers will come even before the questions.

I join with those who have stood on their truth as it has been given through them. I take my hat off to the choir director, all the tenors, the good sistah, the writer of the letter and all those who constantly acknowledge their place in this Spiritual Universe. When you know who you are you live in a world where all is Divine, blessed to an eternity of bliss. And in an eternity of bliss ALL HEAVEN BREAKS LOOSE.

Kamau Ifoma is a freelance writer and founder of Homefree Ministry in Atlanta.

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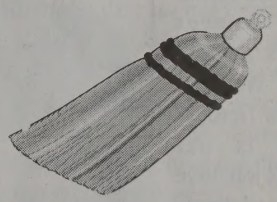

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NO TIME FOR THE RELATIONSHIP AND NO TIME FOR YOU:

EXAMINING YOUR PARTNER'S INVOLVEMENT IN OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

by Carla Anderson, MA

When we think about the possibility of our partner being unfaithful to us and our relationship, different scenarios may come to mind. We may envision the woman at the bookstore who gives our partner the eyes or the guy who calls the house and never leaves a message. We fight just as fiercely if it is our lover's job, love of material possessions, chemical dependency or social involvement that take him or her from our arms? Or, do we just sit silently in our anger, waiting for our pain to be noticed? How many of us are aware that our partner's involvement / addiction with an outside entity can have the same damaging effect as an affair?

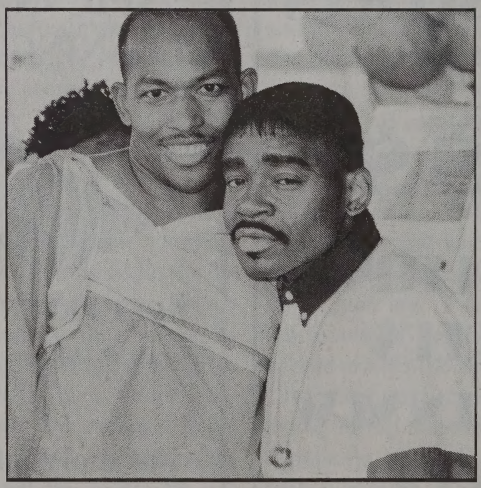


Photo by Ron Singleton

Let us begin by examining some common signs that our partner has or is developing an interest in something other than us. One initial sign is a diminished investment and commitment of time in the relationship. Despite having a conflicting or hectic schedule, many couples make it a point to schedule time together that takes into account both partners needs and wants. Even if that special time is not very frequent, the commitment is

there and neither individual feels ignored or neglected. However, do find that your leather day planner has more "white-out" covered dates than actual events? If this is occurring consistently, and your requests for more time are either being flat-out ignored or conveniently falls off your partner's priority list, your lover is letting you know that time for the relationship may not be first and foremost for him or her.

Another sign is your partner's inability to stop "spending money" or pocket change. If their financial picture has suddenly turned gray, despite continuing to work at the same job or even a better one, they may be pouring money into an activity you which you were not informed. Bar hopping, checking out the clubs and meeting friends for drinks begins to cost if it becomes an addiction. Increased alcohol consumption, marijuana smoking or abuse of other chemicals usually demands more monetary investment over time as our bodies crave more of the same to get the same "buzz". Being draped in the latest fashion or having that couch featured in "Architectural Digest" will strain most of our budgets. As with any relationship, one has to invest more in it as time passes. Note these addictions do evolve into relationships. If we examine four of the most common areas that one could become addicted to, it may become clear why it is similar to our partner having an affair with someone versus something.

Most of us work. However, some of us, due to our community activities, our spiritual pursuits or our sports / hobby related activities, end up with very little free time. On the other hand, the workaholic is typically engaging in many long hours at the office or store for reasons other than to improve their quality of life.

For some, work may become a safe haven from the relationship itself or hot issues that have begun to surface in the relationship.

Issues such as fear of intimacy, decreased or lack of communication, decreased sexual attraction to our partner, increased conflicts and arguments over small things and lack of fulfillment of one's needs and wants. These issues alone or in bunches may make the office more appealing. This is especially the case if one is being constantly reinforced at work, through bonuses, praise and promotions. One begins to find their sense of belongingness in their job, almost similar to one of the reasons why our youth may choose gang involvement. We are, for the most part, social creatures who are taught that home is where we find our happiness. But, for some of us, if our home contains someone who is supposed to be our lover yet they do not know us and we do not want to know them anymore, then we take the long way home. Couple this with an inability to want to face the relationship issues, then you have someone who has the potential to hide in their work for years at a time.

Workaholism may then transform into an entity onto itself. Trying to schedule time with our partner may leave us feeling that our lover is more attracted to their work than us.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

*"What's Going On In your Life?" is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living; whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals..**So tell us - What's going on in your life?.***

Dear Geanie,

I'm a 25 year old gay man who's been involved with a 31 year old man for 4 months. My new date does not see himself in a long term relationship with a man, but he wants to be with me. He wants to get married and have children. He gets close, then he runs, and this cycle affects me deeply. I think it's FEAR, and I'm not sure how to deal with this. We've broken it off one million times already.

How do I end this? Should I stay or should I go? I don't want to end it just yet. How do I deal with this?

Signed,
Lonely Heart

Dear Lonely Heart,

There are just a few areas in this relationship where one might be tempted to read between the lines, ride upon potentials and even harbor false hope.

However, it is important that you listen to what this man is telling you.

He says that he does NOT want a long term relationship with you, A MAN, because he plans to marry (and I can only infer that this means a woman) and have children.

Whether this becomes true or not; this man is telling you "up front" not or put a great deal of faith toward holding on to him. The relationship is beginning with distance in mind.

You are dealing with a man who has not accepted himself nor you as viable or valid as a twosome.

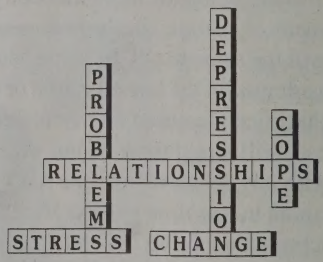
The respect and regard for this relationship is already "one-down". If you continue in it then you can expect to be treated thusly, whether that be knowingly or unknowingly by this person.

The questions you must, therefore, ask yourself are:

A. Is this relationship worth a cost of my self esteem?

B. Am I willing to be a "temporary" or "in the shadows" involvement?

When Life Becomes A Puzzle...



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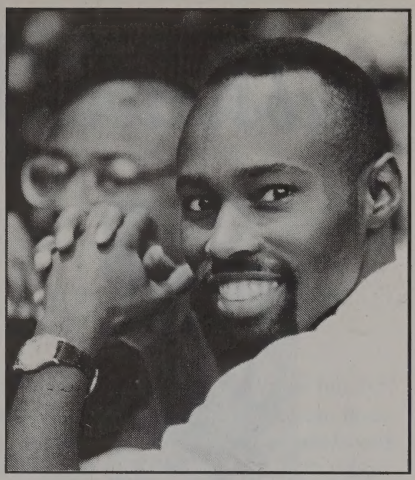
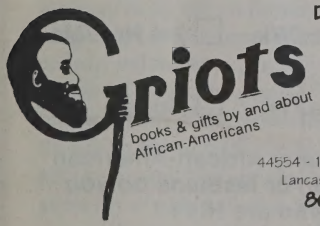
PROFILE OF A MAN

Name:
Marlon Hines
Age:
28
Status:
"Sort of Single"
Career:
Contract Specialist
Hometown:
Newnan, GA
Latest Book Read:
"Bullet Proof Diva: Tales of Race, Sex, and Hair"
by Lisa Jones



Marlon enjoys tennis, bowling and listening to music in his spare time. He is planning to go to law school next fall.



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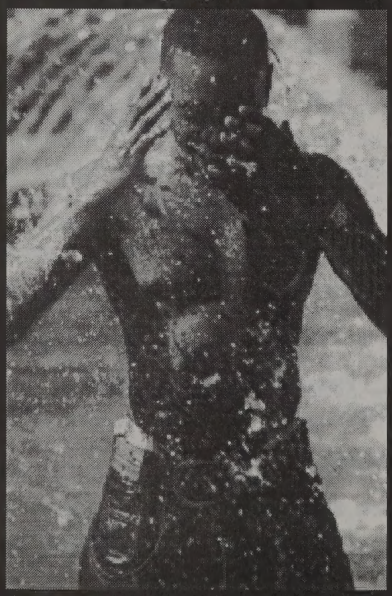

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☐ Yes ☐ No

2) Have you ever donated money or goods to an African-American AIDS Organization?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3) How often do you volunteer for any nonprofit organization?

☐ 2-4 Hrs./Wk. ☐ 2-4 Hrs./Mo.

☐ 2-4 Hrs./Yr. ☐ None

4) How many African-American gay men or lesbians do you know who are HIV+?

☐ 1 - 4 ☐ 5 - 9 ☐ more than 10

5) If you were available to donate your time, what type skills do you have to give?

☐ Legal Advice ☐ Entertainer ☐ Promoter

☐ Domestic/Housekeeper ☐ Administrative/Organizer

☐ Medical/Psychological ☐ Driver/Deliveries

☐ Telephone/Interviewer ☐ Accounting

☐ Cook ☐ Builder/Handyman/woman

See page 45 for a list of African-American AIDS organizations who need your help now.

LIKE THAT

by Dr. Shirlene Holmes

In every family there is someone like that.

And you recognize it early. I always thought my cousin Linda was like that. She wasn't like the other women in the family. Neither was her brother Mercer; he was like that, too. At our annual Fourth of July family reunion barbecues, everyone whispered about it.

When I was a young child, Cousin Linda was a rugged teenager. She was not like the rest of us girls. She didn't wear lace, nor have to sit still on flowered couches and not get dirty. She romped wildly with the boy cousins and teased us playfully, gently touching our faces and kissing our hands. I never remember any of the grown folks in the family asking her to leave the room or treating her like a child. You just couldn't; something about her wouldn't allow it. She was like that.

No one picked on Cousin Linda about it, but Mercer was teased a lot. From his hair to his shoes, he was like that and all the grownups and kids in the family reminded him of it. The way he held his fork and sipped his kool-aid at the barbecue just irritated most of our boy cousins, aunts and uncles. He seemed to hold everything with too much grace and daintiness for a male. Aunt Mamie's grandson, Lamont, who was six times his size, would just punch Mercer in the chest all the time, trying to make a man out of him. Us girls would cry with Mercer, who'd fall backwards and look near death every time. That went on at our reunion barbecues for years until Cousin Linda bust Lamont's ass in front of the entire family. I don't think Lamont came back to our house for another reunion until he was grown with two kids of his own. Aunt Mamie's daughter, Faydonna, sucked her teeth at Linda, glad that at least Lamont wasn't like that.

As I got older, I could tell even more that Cousin Linda was like that. She showed up for our cookouts too dressed up: cuff links in her sleeves, black pants on. She never called them slacks like she was supposed to.

Shoes shined and buffed, her nails freshly manicured and painted with clear polish. And each hair permed and laid with Nu Nile close to her head. She was too bright and smiley. This made her suspicious to me. She wasn't like her sister, Pauline and Beatrice who'd lost their smiles years before, after getting married and giving birth.

Cousin Linda seemed to have a smirk on her face all the time as if she know something the rest of us didn't know. As if she had recently experienced pleasure or knew exactly where to find it if she needed another good feeling. She was truly the life of every family reunion barbecue we had. And we had plenty with loud music, tons of food and laughter. They were held at our house because it had a huge yard and Momma wouldn't have it any other way.

When Booker T. & the MG's "Time is Tight" was playing, Cousin Linda always grabbed one of the family rejects like Fayrella, Uncle Raymond and Faydonna's fat adopted daughter, and just danced her up and down the drive way. Fayrella smiled till she dribbled and drooled; that's the only time she seemed to come out of her shell, when Cousin Linda danced her around. She just loved Cousin Linda, but I guess Fayrella must have been like that, too. No one knows because she had a heart attack and died right after she graduated from high school.

Cousin Linda was very peculiar to me. She had what looked like a mustache and no one said anything about it. Not even Aunt Mamie, who makes it a hobby to mind family folds' business. Once when Cousin Linda stayed overnight at our house (of course I kept my bedroom door locked and couldn't sleep all that night), I caught her in the mirror in my parents' room running an eyebrow pencil across her top lip and down her chin. When she caught me staring, she just winked; I ran to my bedroom and slammed the door! I could hear Momma shouting up from the kitchen, "Linda, what you laughing at so hard?????"

After that, I knew Cousin Linda was like that and it was confirmed when she showed up at the reunion barbecue in 1976 with her "friend" Precious. Me and Valerie and Carla and Necee just sat and watched. Necee was quick to say how cousin Linda's "friend" was so pretty, all dolled up in her hot paints suit, platform shoes and Afro Puffs. And she, neither Carla nor Valerie thought Precious was like that, even I asked them. But they couldn't convince me. I knew something was going on. Cousin Linda was too attentive, too protective, too satisfied.

Aunt Mamie smelled something right away. She didn't want to fix Precious a plate, but Aunt Vi wasn't gonna have no impoliteness to guests. She steered Precious right to the grill and had her point to just the piece of chicken she wanted. Cousin Linda couldn't keep her eyes off Precious, and later in the afternoon I saw her face tighten with jealousy when our Uncle Junie started rapping to Precious.

Uncle Junie knew Cousin Linda was like that, that's why he was hitting on Precious so hard in the first place, sneaking up to the sweet creature and wrapping his crusty dark arm around her tiny exposed waist.

Half mad, Cousin Linda got herself a drink, Barcardi 151. You had to be there. If is wasn't for Mercer taking Cousin Linda for a walk, Uncle Junie might of been celebrating his last Fourth of July that year.

Precious was nice enough, smiling and giggling all day long. All the girl cousins were happy to meet her and touch her and ask her how she got her skin to be so shiny and soft. She confessed to us she sold Avon and used that blue bottled bath oil every day. Carla and Necee smiled all over themselves. Cousin Linda kept edging in our conversations, checking up on what we were talking about. She didn't know if one of us was like that or not and she didn't want to have no trouble.

I noticed that Precious had a wide mouth and it started to upset me. I found myself looking her over a little hard. It made me tingle. I ran in the house, into my bedroom. I didn't want anybody to think I was like that.

My family folks talked about people who was like that. Everybody was scared of them or hated them and spread rumors about them. Let Aunt Mamie tell it: "Cousin Linda was always breaking up somebody's home or talking some young girl into having somebody's baby for her. "That gal, Lanie done got pregnant two times 'cause Linda told her to. Now Linda ain't decent enough to own na'a one of them chu'lins." She even said Cousin Linda had gone for shock treatments so she would stop being like that, but it wasn't working. Aunt Mamie was telling

folks that, in her pants, Cousin Linda was really a man and was just fooling the family living as a woman. Aunt Vi stopped speaking to Aunt Mamie for years over that.

When Aunt Vi, that's Cousin Linda and Mercer's mother, heard family folks whispering, she'd just say real loudly, for Aunt Mamie's benefit, "Leave my babies alone! I birthed them both. I know what they got in their pants."

And the whispering stopped because no one wanted to deal with Aunt Vi's wrath. She had a reputation for using a butcher knife or a gun, especially when it came to her seven kids. She'd cut her husband, Henry, after catching him pulling Renee's drawers down. Renee was one of the foster kids that they had taken in. If she cut Henry over a foster child, no telling what she'd do over one of her natural borns.

By the time I was in my teens and saw cousin Linda again, she had been stationed in California for a while. She hadn't changed. Her brother Mercer had gone to the Air Force to have a man made out of him. Linda had gone to the Marines. That time when I saw her, I remember everything about her being perfect; her teeth, her starched and creased clothes, her nails, her words. She brought the beauty to that sunny holiday, the way she cocked her head to the side and licked her lips so they wouldn't dry. It was another Fourth of July. She was helping Lamont haul in the beer and soda for the family reunion barbecue, a L&M Red dangling limp and white from her dark lips. She was like that. Still. I could tell.

Between sips of Cutty Sark she talked about boot camp and how many places she had been since then. She bragged about all the good loving she was getting, but she wouldn't say from who. Me, Necee, Valerie and Carla wanted to know real bad, but wouldn't ask. She had a gold chain around her neck with a woman's ruby birthstone ring on it, but she wouldn't say nothing. I wanted desperately to know who this "ruby" was and what she was doing so right that Linda felt compelled to chain a part of her around her throat.

Aunt Mamie finally got it said. "Whose ring is that, Linda Ruth?"

"It's my ring, Mamie."

Us girls snickered, our bellies tightened flat. No one under her age ever addressed Aunt Mamie without using a title first. That day, Cousin Linda was our hero. Aunt Mamie didn't ask again, sh just turned abruptly in her squealing lawn chair, fixed her wig with her free hand, and sucked that remaining flesh from her barbecued chicken bone.

Later that night, like always, all the cousins paired and tripled off to go talk and.....reunite. Carla had this thing going with Clayton. Valerie and Necee both were crazy about DeMichael Anthony, so they all went to sit on the stoop to hold hands and flirt. I just kept to myself busy cleaning up.

The sun was setting slow and pretty. Everyone would gather soon to shoot off firecrackers and spin steel wool. I was wiping off the red and white plastic table cloth when Cousin Linda came over. I see her, still smiling, out of the corner of my eye. Tall, a runner's body. Handsome. And clean, as if she hadn't been dancing every girl cousin and aunt, even Mamie, around the yard.

"So Sheena, how old are you now?" my cousin asked.

"Old enough to eat my cornbread and black-eye peas without choking?" I said back, feeling something funny inside, knowing I was writing a check I couldn't cash.

"You must be legal now, 18, right?"

"Yeah, what about it?" I answered much too silly and quick.

My throat was real dry. I scrubbed the table cloth hard.

"What you doing out here by yourself cleaning for? It's the 4th, baby; you should be off with the others."

"No, that's all right. I promised Momma I'd help clean up."

"Well, let me help you," she said, collecting up debris from the grass near the table.

The Godfather was squealing in the background: "I got that feeling, baby!!!!" Cousin Linda bopped and swayed, popping her polished fingers loudly to the beat.

My gaze fixed on her as she had her way with the music, kicking a leg here, raising an arm there. Howling, her red tongue hanging out in ecstasy...good God!

"BABY BABY BABY!.....BABY BABY BABY!.....I GOT THAT FEELING....COME ON NOW!!!!!

She started to spin, her pelvis pushing against the evening, her head thrown back.

I stared long after her dance and the record stopped.

She was quiet. Me too.

Then breaking the silence in half, she said, while reaching for the cloth I had in my hand, "You looking so fine." Taking the words right out of my mouth.

I dropped the cloth. We both bent down to get it from under the table. Our eyes met. Then our lips.

She grinned, gave me the rag, walked down the drive way, got in her car and drove.... I ran into the house and locked myself in the bathroom.

Maybe I was like that

I jumped in the shower, hot as I could stand it and tried to burn off the feeling. Through the window I could hear the family talking downstairs: Uncle Junie, with his drunk self, shouting at Faydonna, "Goddamn, baby, come on; shake it but don't break it!!!"

Lamont and Clayton setting up the fireworks; "Man, gimme that damn thing 'fore you hurt yourself!" And Aunt Vi and them were having a serious game of bid wiss: "Clubs, my ass, you better bow down to this trump card, shit!" Daddy was sitting in his favorite lawn chair trying to talk some sense in DeMichael, who was now named Rasheed Rahim. "Boy, I'm telling you that Elijah Muhammad ain't shit. You better realize what the bible say. JESUS IS THE ANSWER, and ain't no Allah gonna save none of ya'll damn bean pie selling Muslims from hellfire!"

I rubbed the soap deeply into my skin. I could feel the steam frizzing my hair, but I stayed there until my skin squeaked clean. Every time I say Cousin Linda after that, it wasn't the same. I kept avoiding her till later that night when she grabbed my arm saying. "Sheena, why you running from me? I ain't gonna hurt you, girl." And she kissed me again. Like that.

I couldn't tell nobody. Not even Necee who was my ace boon coon at the time. I didn't even want to write it in my diary in case Momma was snooping around and found it. I was in my room thinking thoughts like that when I heard Momma scream up to my bedroom window, "Sheena! Girl, we gonna cut the watermelon; bring me my knife!!! Sheena! Linda go on up and find Sheena. Tell her I need my butcher knife out the kitchen."

I sweated and scrambled around my room. Buttoning up my blouse, zipping my jeans, I heard the knock, but I couldn't move to the door. Another knock.

"Open this door, Sheena. Your Momma wants her knife."

"It's in the kitchen."

"Tell me something I don't know, like when you gonna open this door."

I did it. Opened the door. She was there. Neatly together. Smiling cocking her permed head to the side, sipping from her cup. She moved to come in.

"No...I'm coming down."

"Your eyes look like they gonna pop out, Sheena."

"Why you kiss me like that?"

"Why'd you let me?"

"I'm scared of you."

"No, you scared of yourself. Don't worry; I'm not a thief. I only take what's given.

And with that Cousin Linda turned and went back outside. I saw her from the window, winking up at me. I laid light headed back across the bed, mad that she affected me like that.

I stayed away from the barbecues and my cousin a long time. I ran away, putting 2 or 3 states between me and the family every holiday. Momma fussed, but I had so many excuses she finally left me alone about it. I heard a lot about my cousin over the years through Momma: how she was living in Phoenix with a white woman or in Minnesota with a girl half her age. I always pressed Momma for details after the reunions: who did Cousin Linda have with her, in what ear was she wearing her earring. Did she still have on expensive shoes.

And this morning, Momma was telling that Cousin Linda is living with an old big bosomed evangelist in a house they own in Washington DC. Aunt Mamie has already tried to get them both put out of the church about it, but hasn't succeeded yet.

And me, I'm standing here cutting up the fixings for potato salad for the annual family barbecue reunion tomorrow, my permed head cocked to the side, my girlfriend's ring on my neck and a smile on my face just like that.

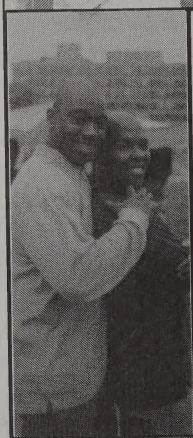
Dr. Shirlene Holmes is Assistant Professor of Communications at Georgia State University.

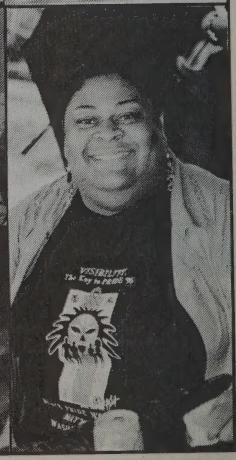
Photo by Gregory Victorianne

Pictured (L to R): MOCAA's Board Member Gary Daffin, MOCAA's Director Michael Richmond, Author E. Lynn Harris, Arnold Sapenter, MOCAA's Summer Youth Internship Coordinator, and Stephen Tierney, MOCAA Board Member.

Boston - Men of Color Against AIDS. Inc. recently hosted an evenong reception with E. Lynn Harris, author of "Just As I Am" and "Invisible Life" at the G.L.A.S.S. Youth Center during Boston's Gay Pride Week. E. Lynn read excerpts from his forthcoming book, "And This Too Shall Pass", scheduled for March 1996.

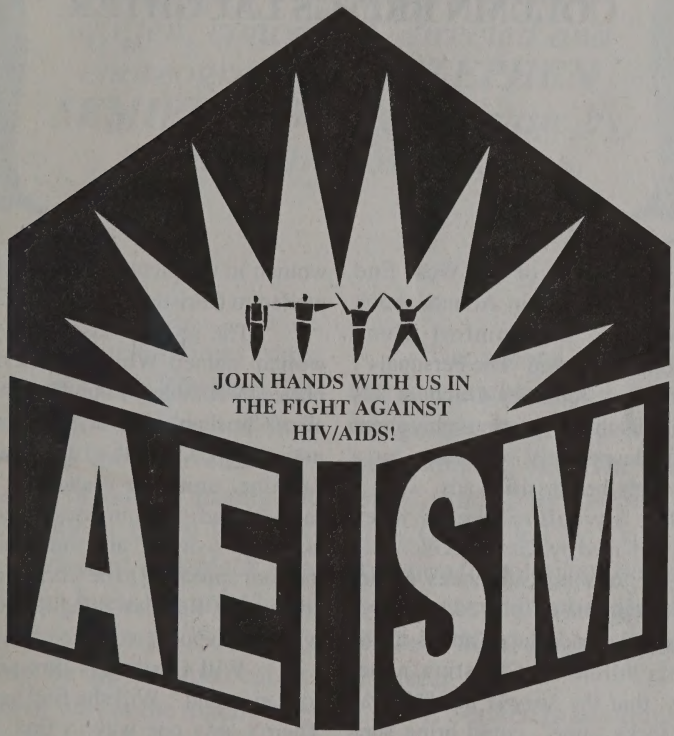
SCENES FROM D.C.'S BLACK GAY PRIDE '95





YOU'VE SEEN US, WE'VE SEEN YOU
NOW LET US SEE YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

IN GEORGIA, THERE WERE OVER 6,000 REPORTED CASES OF AIDS IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY 67% OF WHICH ARE HOMOSEXUAL/BI-SEXUAL MEN.



Our primary focus is gay, black men. We provide support through housing assistance, bar/club outreach, support groups, and financial assistance.

"We Love You, Love Yourself... BE SAFE..."

If you would like to volunteer, need information or make a tax deductible contribution please contact:
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P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, Georgia 30337
(404) 753-2900, (404) 753-7733

"THE PERSONALS"

COLUMN BRINGS LAUGHTER

by AJ

The walls of the West End Cultural Arts Theatre in Atlanta shook with laughter as Comfort Zone Productions performed "The Personals". Writer/director, Kimbley Gilchrist has created an absolutely hilarious play about a woman desperately searching for a mate through the classified ads.

The adventure begins when Christian, (played by Kimbley Gilchrist), ignores the obvious advances of her seductive roommate, (played by Sonya M. Hemphill), and places an ad in the personals column. Christian never imagines that the simple ad, "Nubian woman seeks same", could bring such comical complications.

The laughter begins when Christian, who anxiously anticipates love on the first date, meets rambunctious Rose Rose Sr., (played by Jane Galvin Lewis). Rose is a ranting, raving, religious fanatic in desperate need of a hairdresser. Rose bears absolutely no resemblance to the young, attractive woman in the picture she "accidentally" mailed to Christian.

The second fiasco is a neurotic woman named Whitney, convincingly played by Kimberly Pittman. Whitney fits all of Christian's qualifications except one important one. The third date is with Lady Jasmine, uniquely played by Frankie James. Lady Jasmine described herself as "every woman" and saunters through the door appearing to be Christian's dream come true. But alas, things aren't always what they appear to be.

Will Christian's dire search for love ever end? Will she find happiness? There's only one way to find out. See "The Personals". For more information call 718-802-9037.

Playwright/director Kimbley Gilchrist is a graduate of the New York University Theatre Program. She has studied playwrighting in the U.S. and Europe. She is currently working on a script for production this fall entitled "A Midsummer Dyke's Dream".

"CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT"

Opening in Los Angeles' Ebony Showcase Theatre, "Children Of The Night" is presented by ***STANLEY BENNETT CLAY;*** *written, conceived, directed and choreographed by* ***STEPHEN SEMIEN,*** *with original music by* ***BYRON SMITH.***

The Los Angeles Times' stage review reveals that "Children" attacks homophobia in high style.

The 14 member cast bobs with waves of talent; among the most striking is Larry (Bobcat) Jeffries. Adorned in a black slip, wig and high heels, he unfurls the incandescent song, "Miss It", which may be the first musical explanation of why some macho conditioned men can make love to other men only as long as they're in drag. Jeffries' next mercurially materializes into an intimidating dude who looks as if he just stepped off a diesel truck. Basic to all these performers, and emblematic of Semien's dance background, is their skill with body language.

The second act takes a detour to a neighborhood church with the gospel-soaring, golden-robed cast pumping out "The Blood of Jesus", (music by the New Jersey Mass Choir), led by a ringing exhortation for tolerance delivered in the manner of a verbal pinwheel by Michael Neal's hyperventilating reverend.

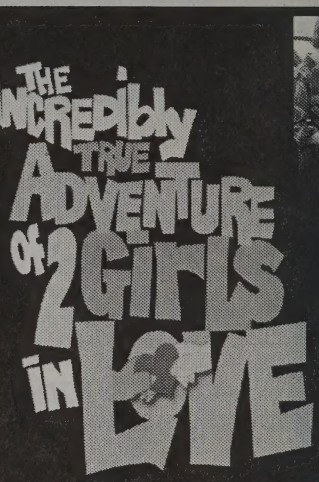
If Semien is anything, he's a showman. Time after time, most hilariously in a number between two little girls playing hopscoth and marbles and talking about sex in the dumb, uncomprehending way children do, the show makes a scalding statement about sexual bigotry while making sure to entertain you first.

"An intensely romantic comedy. Imagine 'Pretty In Pink' with lesbians."
ESQUIRE, *Joseph Hooper*

NEWSWEEK
"First love, straight or gay, has rarely been so expertly enacted."
David Ansen

BOSTON GLOBE
"Fresh & endearing, as much acoming-of-age story as aromantic comedy."
Jay Carr

OUT MAGAZINE
"An awkwardly charming teen lovestory. An incredibly likable feature."
Lawrence Chua



FINE LINE FEATURES presents a SMASH PICTURES Production of a film by MARIA MAGGENTI "THE INCREDIBLY TRUE ADVENTURE OF TWO GIRLS IN LOVE"
LAUREL HOLLOMAN NICOLE PARKER Costume Designer CHERYL HURWITZ Production Designer GINGER TOUGAS Director of Photography TAMI REIKER Editor SUSAN GRAEF
Sound Designer STEVE BORNE Original Score TERRY DAME Co-Producer A. JOHN RATH Produced by DOLLY HALL
Written and Directed by MARIA MAGGENTI

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The 411 ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

Going Out Tonight?

BARS	LOCATION	BEST NITE	MIX	MUSIC
WAREHOUSE (TRAXX)	306 Luckie St. (404) 577-9510	Sat.	Men 80% Women 20%	House
WATERWORKS CAFE	111 Luckie St. (404) 577-7059	Sun. Fri.	Men 70% Women 30%	R&B House Show
PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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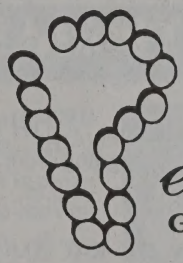

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OLDIES NITE
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ATLANTA
404-524-0036

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JULY

Sunday July, 2 - Annual July 4th Picnic in Candler Park (McClendon Ace. east of Little Fice Points) at 4 p.m. Meet by the pool. Call (404) 908-7371 for more information.

Thursday, July 13 - Charis: Books and More. 1189 Euclid avenue, Atlanta. AFRIKAN ALKHEMY: Spiritual and Soul Transformation in America. Gwynelle reads her book "Afrikan Alkhemy" in which she suggests that African-Americans are a "new species". She states that because "we carry genetic traits of two sets of forebears - Africans stolen from their homeland..." This is a reading that will prove to be enlightening as well as spiritually enriching. 404-524-0304.

Through July 13 - Each Thursday, 7:00 p.m. The African-American Amatuer Film society and West End Performing Arts Center presents various black films, $2.00 - public, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd; for more information: (404) 818-6444

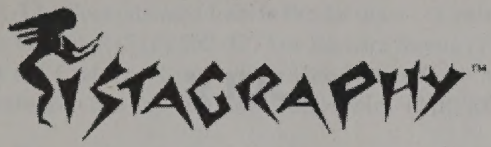
Saturday, July 22 - 7:00 p.m., Our cousin's House, Inc. cordially invite all to their Gospel Celebration in recognition of one year of serving in the HIV/AIDS community. Featured guest Evangelist, Margaret Davie, along with B. Chase Williams and Shabach. Free admission with free will offering benefiting Our Cousin's House, Inc. at Victory Baptist Church "The Temple", 1170 N. Hairston Rd., Stone Mountain, GA.

Saturday, July 22 - Venus in the House!...Fundraiser. "House Party" at the Venus Office, 616 Ormewood Ave. D.J. 10:00 p.m. - 4:00 a.m., $5.00 suggested donation, cash bar. Party all night! 2 "BID" tables. No high heels, please!

Wednesday, July 26 - TRUTH BOOKSTORE, 56 Marietta Street, Atlanta. Barbara Smith will be signing from her book, "B. Smith Entertaining & Cooking for Friends". From 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Thursday, July 27 - RACISM IN THE GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY - First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Chandler Park, 7:30 p.m. We come together with the hopes of identifying problems within our community and hopefully offering solutions as to how to start the healing process. This program is co-sponsored by the following:
Charis, The first Existentialist congregation, Fund for Southern communities, Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Alliance of Emory, ZAMI, Hospitality Atlanta, Venus Magazine, Fourth Tuesday, Latinos en Accion, Positive Black Lesbians, Second Sunday discussion group, Black Lesbians with children, Southern voice, Outwrite Books, AALGA, Spellman college Lesbian Bisexual Alliance, Project *Open Hand, Black & White men together, AIDS Survival Project, SisterLove, Inc., Act up, Our Cousin's House, African-American Outreach.

GALLERY OPENINGS



A photographic exhibit entitled "From the Soul", which shows how African-American women photograph music, is now showing at M-Print Gallery located at 253 Trinity aveenue, SW in downtown Atlanta. The exhibit will hang in the gallery through July 21st 1995. Please call M-Print Gallery at (404) 523-4434 for more information.

The 54th Massachusettes, presented by Hammonds House,503 Peeples St. Atlanta. Showing until August 13, 1995. (404) 752-8730

Discovering *Ellis Ruley*

The works of Ellis Ruley will be presented at The High Museum of Art: Folk Art and Photography Galleries through July 22, 1995. Call (404) 522-6940

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Black Mens' Xchange (BMX) presents THE BLACK WOMEN'S XCHANGE (BWX). The BWX is African-American women who come together in a supportive environment to discuss issues related to our empowerment and the uplifting of our community. Every friday at 8:00 p.m. at the AMASSI Center, 3419 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Oakland CA. Contact Ms. Clydis (510) 649-0536 for more information. WE PUT BLACK LOVE INTO PRACTICE.

New Bar Opens In Washington, D.C. - Girls On The Side, which is located at 1751 Penn. Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. will have its grand opening July 1-3. Vicki Harris & Lisa Jones, partners of the bar, assure us that this will be a place for all women. The bar will be open every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday starting July 6th. The bar is also available for private parties and social events. Contact Vicki Harris for bookings at (202) 788-1866

NATIONAL EVENTS

JULY

Atlanta
Saturday, July 22 - Venus in the House!...Fundraiser. "House party at the Venus Office, 616 Ormewood Ave., SE. DJ 10:00 p.m. - 4:00 a.m. $5.00 suggested donation, cash bar. Party all night! 2 "BID" tables. No high heels please!

Los Angeles
Saturday, July 1 - ATB...At The Beach presents its 7th Annual Beach Party, $5.00. Point Dume, Malibu. 7 a.m. Hard body, sexy swimsuit, Diva contests, after party, Grand Ballroom, LA Airport Mariott. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m. $12.00.

DC
Saturday, July 1 - Come cool off in the hottest bar in DC, Wet. Join Lisa Yaya, Goldie, Tease & Hollywood from 3 p.m. - 7 p.m. (202) 468-1200.
Saturday, July 1 - "Girls on the Side", A place for all women! DC's newest addition! Located at 1751 Penn Ave., NW (Old English Lounge). For more info call Vickie (202) 788-1866.

NY
Saturday, July 15 - Simplicity attractions Unlimited cordially invite you to their first annual WHITE & GOLD YACHT PARTY! Come sail "The Diplomat" Tickets $50.00 per person. Leaving pier 84, West 43rd St. & 11th Ave. For reservations and info contact: Gretchen Young (718) 277-4575; Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701; Marline Birkett (718) 365-2121; Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073; Mabel Thomas (718) 588-5125. It's Mabel's birthday, come join the celebration!!

Boston
July 1 - 4 - Rachel's weekend in Provincetwon. Shoreline Motel. $99. pp. (718) 471-1283.

Baltimore
Saturday, July 22 - Simplicity Attractions Unlimited presents a bus trip to Durham, NC, to celebrate the anniversary of Exclusively Esquiress. $193.00 per person. Call for info. Bobbi Moore, (301) 596-6167.

Cincinatti
July 21 - 24 - Christmas in July! Party with over 600 of the Children Sponsored by Kaptar's. For info, reservations call: Rachel's (718) 471-1283.

AUGUST

NY

Friday, August 11-13 - Sophisticated Ladies Productions - "Cruise to Nowhere" - Contact Aquonetta Wright at (718) 562-3273 or Barbara Simon (718) 562-7712

Saturday, August 19 - Crab Fest Cruise aboard the Spirit of Baltimore. DJ, buffet, open bar, all the crabs you can eat! $80.00, contact Mini (718) 681-3746.

Baltimore

Friday, August 11-13, - Annual HINT OF HAWAII WEEKEND IN BALTIMORE MD. Buses will leave Friday morning and return Sunday evening. Contact Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167.

SEPTEMBER

Atlanta

Sunday, September 3 - Prism announces their 3rd annual Buckhead Beach Party held at the Buckhead Town Club. 5 p.m. - 1 a.m. $10.00. Call (404) 344-6865

Saturday, September 9 - Youth conference on sexual orientation: a one day conference bringing together sexually diverse young folks, our friends, families, mentors and peers to share our life experiences and to talk about challenges facing Atlanta's youth as well as discuss survival skills, support available, and what is need to foster healthy living. Please join us. For more info, call Steve or Wendi at (404) 908-5368.

NY

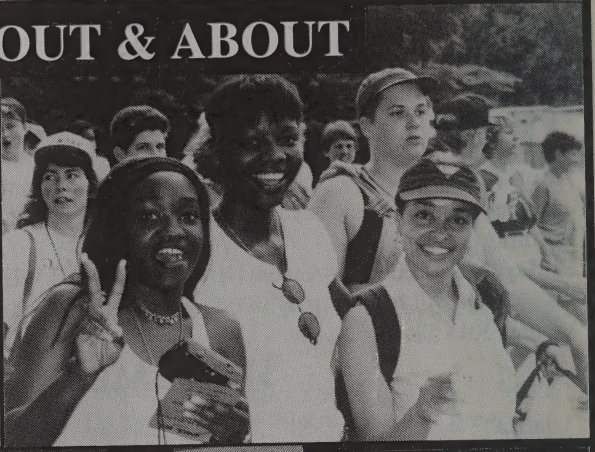
Saturday, September 2 - "Women of the '90's" presents "Our Family reunion" (Bonnie and Clyde Reunion). Contact Bess Knowing (718) 992-9073 for more info.

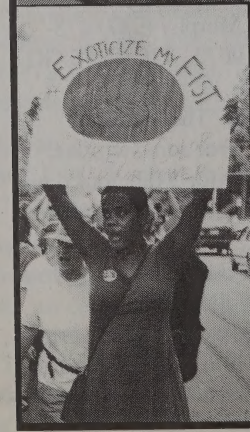
Saturday, September 9 - X-Centrics presents "An End of Summer Jam" at the South Oxford Club located at 187 South Oxford St. in Brooklyn from 11 p.m.- 5 a.m., tickets $30.00 in advance, open bar. Featuring special guest appearances, the music by: GHP. For more info & tickets contact: MD Murphy (917) 278-1649, Jackie Brantley (914) 972-3205, or Bess (718) 992-9073. TICKETS GO ON SALE JULY, 1995!!!

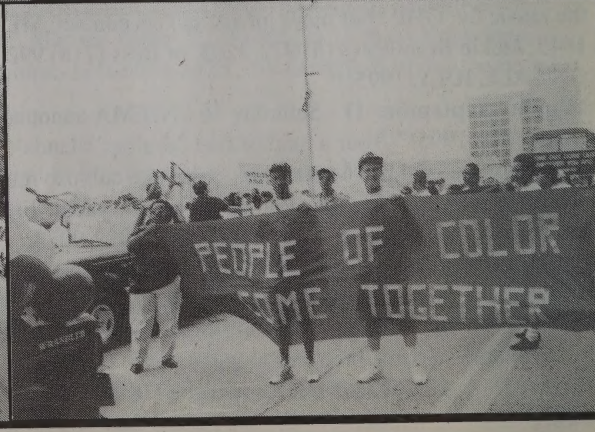
Monday September 11 - Saturday 16 - NJEMA announces "The Cruise of Distinction 1995!" Tour a total of five fabulous islands!! Free rum swizzles, happy hour, island bar-b-que, live reggae and calypso music for 5 fabulous days aboard a Caribbean Cruise. Join us aboard the yacht "Flying Cloud". For ticket information contact Bess Knowings at (718) 992-9073.

Saturday, September 16 - 4th Annual Oldtimers Softball Game & Picnic. Join us at FDR Park for a funfilled day of softball, basketball, volleyball, and relaxation!! Dust off those bats & gloves if you want to "play ball!" Free grills are available so come prepared to barbeque!! For further info., contact Barbara Rooks, (718) 429-6726, Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073 or Val / Julie (718) 379-4075.

OUT & ABOUT







Photos by Jenai Jones and KES

ORGANIZATIONS

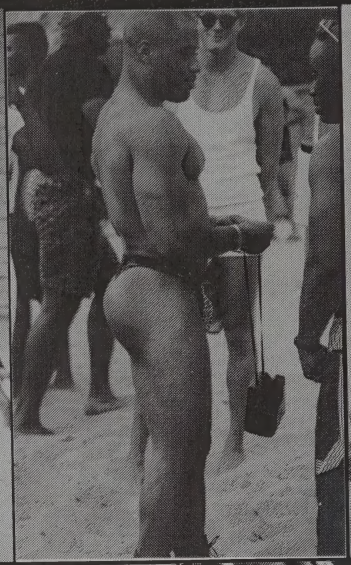
Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

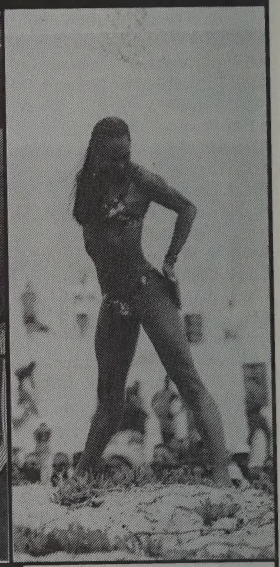
Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM. (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA, 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
All Saints Metropolitan Community Church, 575 Boulevard. Sunday, 7:00 p.m., evenings, 8:30 p.m., (404) 622-1154.
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Black Women's Xchange (BWX) - Meets every Friday at 8:00p.m. at the Amassi Center. 3419 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way Oakland CA. For more info call Ms. Clydis (510) 649-0536
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Different Gyrl Production, PO Box 13346, Atlanta, GA 30324 (404) 908-5340
gabc - greater atlanta business coalition, 2103 N. Decatur Road, Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033 Phone (404) 377-4258 Fax (404) 37708500
Gay & Out Productions, PO Box 111, Clarkston, GA 30021-0111 Phone (404) 299-7809 Fax (404) 508-8697
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (212) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, Youth support group; P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Our Cousin's House, An African-American AIDS organization. 1023 Dill Ave., Atlanta, GA 30310. (404) 756-9202.
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Project Open Hand Atlanta, (404) 525-4620, Home delivered meals for people with AIDS related illness
Project AZUKA, Inc., an AIDS organization for women. P.O. Box 9173, Savannah, GA 31402. (912) 233-6733
Redefined Faith Unity Fellowship Church, P.O. Box 50047, Atlanta, GA 30302. (404) 388-4624.
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Sophisticated Ladies, Lesbian Social Group for Mature Women of Color (202) 788-1866
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 908-5368
TRIKONE, An asian, gay & Lesbian organization, trikatl@mindspring.com
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (310) 301-8035
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, ***w/ Deborah Paget***, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love,** ***Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM** ***Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, Atlanta's premiere African-American lesbian organization meets 2nd and 4th Sundays from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Call (404) 370-1392

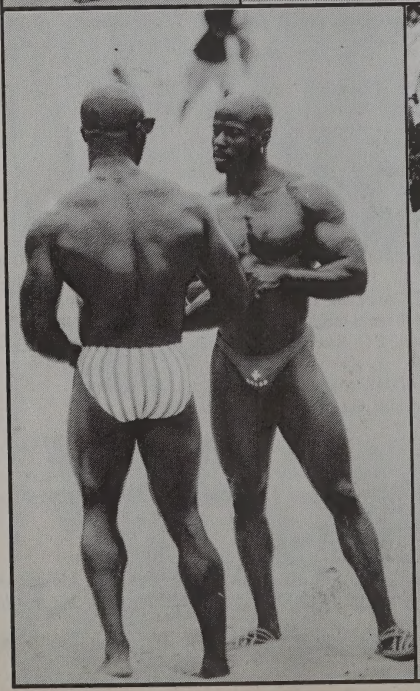
AT THE BEACH HOT SHOTS

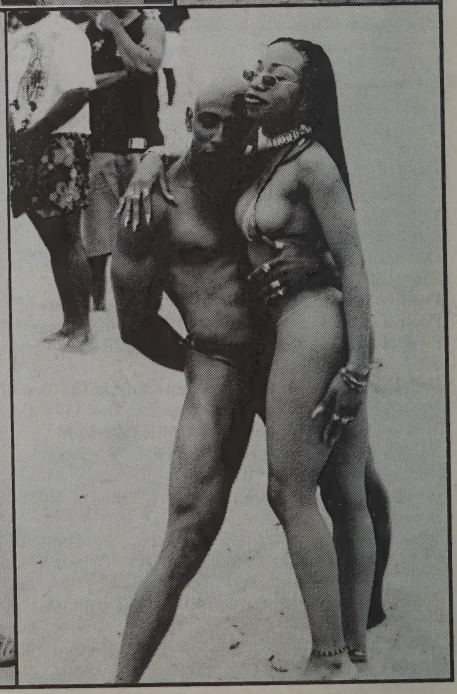
Los Angeles

Point Dume Malibu









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MORE DETAILS IN THE AUGUST ISSUE

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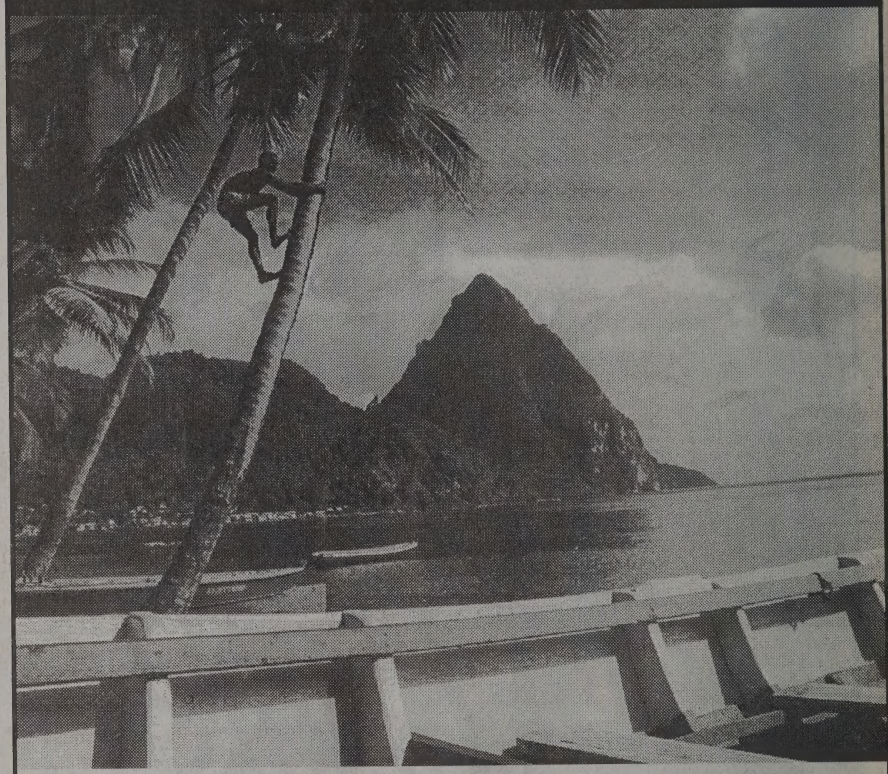

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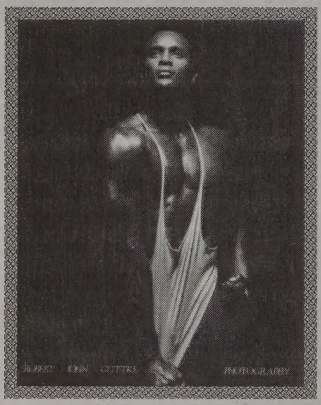

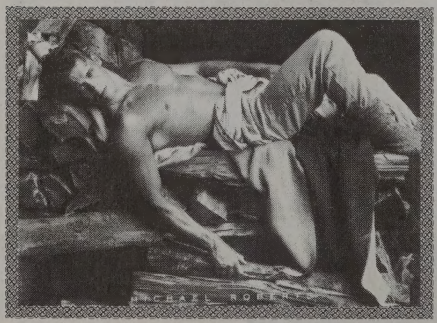

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Dekalb College
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Howard U.
Georgia Southern U.

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Starship Enterprises
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This, That & the Other

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MACON
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Topaz

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MOCAA events
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LOS ANGELES
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Black Gay Pride, Inc.
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Events
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NEW ORLEANS
Charlene's
Wolfensdales
Club Attractions

NEW YORK CITY
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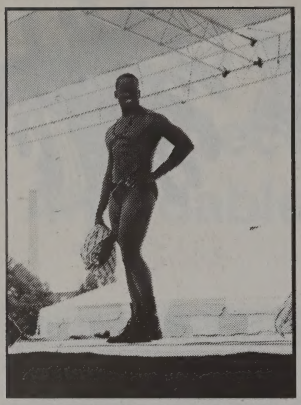
Events

BALTIMORE
Simplicity Attractions

BROOKLYN
4 Seasons events

PHILADELPHIA
Giavonni's Room

SAVANNAH
Project Azuka, Inc.
Our Family Circle events



Ron Singleton

D.C.'s Black Gay Pride '95

KES

Brook Perry at
Atlanta's Dyke March

Ron Singleton

At The Beach!

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Venus™

July 1995
Vol. 1 No. 6

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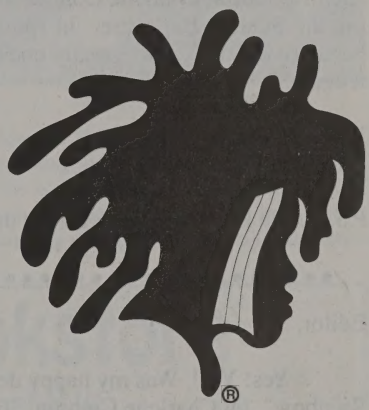

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LETTERS

Brothers & Sisters,

Just wanted to publicly thank you all for making my visit to Atlanta a "jood" one. Special "shout outs" go to: Doug Jones, for opening up his home to me and keeping me in stitches; Marlon, Carlos, Badili, Kevin, Ulster, Mark and Patrick (the bold and beautiful one), for the great conversation and company; Philip and Outwrite Bookstore for their professionalism and hospitality; David-Michael, "the cutie with the camera", for capturing the Outwrite reading on film (can't wait to see the photos); the talented Thomas Bevel for that phat "B-Boy Blues" cast drawing (I'm still smiling over it, thanks for bringing the story to life); all the readers for their insight and inspiration; Charlene Cothran and the Venus staff for profiling me and for hosting the Sunday Barbeque. In spite of the rumormongers and the crafty, childish behavior of some, it was really one of the best dates on my tour so far. We must do it again.

Peace & God Bless,
James Earl Hardy

P.S.: Little Bit, Dooquie & Junior thank you, too...and vow to return soon.

• •

Editor,

Yes! Yes! Was my happy delight, after reading "Racism Under The Rainbow", by Charlene Cothran. To read someone else who understands "silence really does equal death." Thank you C. Cothran for sharing your feelings and some of ours which may not be spoken, but always felt.

"How can we get past the ignorance if we don't talk to each other?"
Representative Cynthia McKinney, (D. GA)

From the Desk of Hermes Bushong

• •

Dear Venus Magazine,

I'm new to Atlanta and I have found your magazine to be a viable and uplifting connection to the African-American gay and lesbian community. I'm writing because I'm interested in finding out if someone can suggest good productive places and organizations other than nightclubs and/or bars to connect with my brothers and sisters in the gay community. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated!

Thank you
Edgar McGowan

PROFILE OF A WOMAN

Name:
Jena P. Jones
Age:
35 to those who know her
(ageless to those who don't!)
Status:
Single
Career:
Photographer, etc., etc., etc.
Hometown:
Atlanta, Georgia
Latest Book:
"Lights, Science, Magic"

Photo by Robert Rostick

Jena is the current Executive Director of Zone III Photographic Workshop, Inc., an organization dedicated to developing and presenting more positive images of African-Americans created by African-Americans. She is also a member of Sistagraphy™, an Atlanta based group of African-American women photographers. Jena's work can be seen in both organizations' group exhibits currently on display at Atlanta's Hammonds House and M-Print Galleries repectively.

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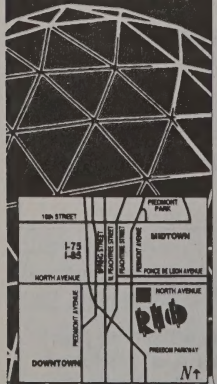

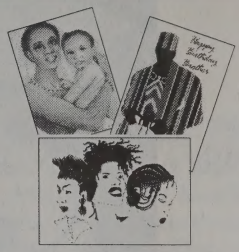

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THEATRE TROUPE FORMING IN ATLANTA

by AJ

The executive director of the most successful African-American Lesbian theatre company in New York City will be in Atlanta in August seeking new talent. Sonya M. Hemphill, the founder of Think It's Not When It Is, Inc., (TINWII), will be conducting theatre workshops that will lead to the creation of a TINWII theatre troupe in Atlanta. "I am impressed with the women of Atlanta," said Miss Hemphill. They have intelligence, drive and talent. It's the perfect place to develop new writers and actresses."

Ms. Hemphill's company, "Think It's Not When It Is, Inc.", is based in New York City and was founded in 1990. It is a prominent theatre company dedicated to promoting positive lesbian and gay imagery in the media. Currently, Ms. Hemphill is very frustrated and disappointed with the representation of lesbians in the media. "How we are seen," she told me, "is how we are believed to be. Presently, we are not seen in a positive light. TINWII travels all over the country to teach and change that perception. Think It's Not When It Is, Inc. is providing lesbian actresses with the opportunity to depict positive lesbian characters. We must give voice to our experiences, so that others can learn. That is our mission." For mor information call 404-395-6144.

"Sensuality", Ms. Hemphill's first play, was featured in Atlanta in February. "Sensuality" has astounded audiences in Boston, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and San Francisco. They will be opening in Philadelphia in August, North Carolina and Detroit in September and Iowa in October.

SECOND SUNDAY DISCUSSION GROUP MEETS ZAMI

"If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up in mine, let us work together."
Lilla Watson

by Dream Gomez

When the possibility of a gathering with Second Sunday was mentioned, I think the women of Zami were intrigued by the idea. Personally, it had not occurred to me that black gay men would form the same type of support group that the women of Zami had. When I found out the number of gay black men who routinely attended the Second Sunday meetings, I was surprised. I had been saying to myself, I think, "Yes, there are gay black men; as long as they don't bother me, I won't bother them. It is an attitude that I would not have challenged in myself if not for this group meeting.

The steering committees of both groups had met to determine a list of topics that might be discussed. The topics that were finally chosen to discuss in the group were the following: Sex roles for lesbians (top and bottom)?; Does age and class determine top and bottom?; When gay black men have female friends, why do the women tend to be the glamour-type?; and finally, What are the misconceptions and stereotypes that we have about each other? Both lists included even more, equally compelling questions, some of them a bit silly, but all of them attempts to get to know each other better.

I attended the meeting a little ashamed that there would be no male face there that I knew personally; yet, I was hopeful that I might make the acquaintance of someone I could get to know.

I was off to a bad start by coming late. But my girlfriend and I were welcomed into a small group that consisted of about 15 men and two other women.

The groups were discussing the misconceptions and stereotypes that we, as lesbians and gay men, have about each other. It took a moment for me to get into the feel of the group. I did get the sense, right away, that every one was earnestly determined to approach the subject seriously and thankfully, humorously. I wish I could recount here who said what, when and where. I can't. Chalk it up to time and failing memory. I can, however tell you of one statement that was made and the response to it.

As we continued into the conversation about misconceptions, some one said "We are not all drag queens!" A brother responded to that by saying " No, we are not all drag queens, but we drag queens are here; we are a part of this conversation. We are not off somewhere in the distance." He was exactly right.

This statement impressed me the most because it answered my own attitude about gay black men. They are not "off somewhere, in the distance". They are here. Doing the same things that we lesbians are doing: hiding and not hiding; raising children; buying houses; holding jobs; making friends; making love; living.

There is a lot to be gained by getting to know which problems might be particular to being a gay black men or being a lesbian, and which problems we might share. It is important to keep the dialogue going. It is important to come together for our liberation.

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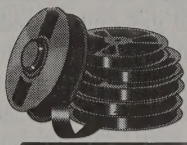

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Racism Under the Rainbow

by Douglas E. Jones

Part II

In case you missed the riot in L.A., knodded through the beatings in Bensonhurst, finessed around the fiasco over Freaknik (a.k.a. the Freedom Fest), ignored the outraged exit of white patrons from a local gay club turned too colored to be comfortable, or watched as that brother or sister was hassled for just one more piece of photo I.D. at the door of another, I am here to tell you that America has a serious race problem. It is a malignant tumor eating away at the very fabric of our existence and the gay and lesbian community is just a microcosm of the whole.

As African Americans we have contributed to every facet of the development of this country. African American lives have been expended abroad in the fight to save pure, white American democracy, only for other African Americans to return to find that the sacrifice of a black life is simply not enough for an entire race of people to be deemed equal to one white life.

It is not acceptable for white folks to continue shrugging their shoulders and feigning ignorance when presented with the spectre of racism. White Americans do so at the potential risk of considerable bloodshed. Black America is frustrated at the continued marginalization of our existence, of our experiences, of the worth and meaning of our lives. Not only am I bewildered over the sheer ignorance of white America in its continued refusal to acknowledge this serious and dire problem of race, I am confused as to why white Americans are not making strides to become more inclusive in their sharing of power and privilege.

In Atlanta, a city which is seventy percent Black, it is interesting to note that economic and political power is still largely the domain of whites. However, let me not place all of the blame for this problem of race on the ignorance and shortsightedness of white folks. As African American folks, we have a responsibility to point out all instances of injustice and prejudice occurring because of

this problem of race.

Brothers and sisters, do not buckle under the weight of oppression and your own internalized racism. Recognize it for the negative, restrictive, limiting force it is and cast it out. Force yourselves to challenge implied limitations set by the insecurities of others. Indeed, there was great tragedy in that night at Burkharts (described in part one of this series), as some slovenly drunk let his liquor get the best of him. There was greater tragedy in the indifferent dismissal rendered by the management as they ignored the requests of Charlene to ask the drunkard to leave. But the greatest tragedy lay in the cowardly avoidance of the incident by those brothers and sisters who sat silently in their attempt to "just ignore him," and who continue to patronize that establishment as it continues in its silence of the situation, as though the incident never happened.

Brothers and sisters, we must learn to demand respect, to expect respect, in the places we choose to socialize and spend our money. Demand it, command it even, and if it is not forthcoming, leave and spend your money elsewhere.

Better yet, start your own place in which to socialize and spend your money. In this day and age, much different from the limited opportunities and resources our Ancestors faced in the sixties and look at how much they accomplished!! Anything less is unacceptable. Economic empowerment is a vital reality in this country where so much is determined by the dollar bill.

I am no longer interested in this never ending 'debate' about the presence of racism: The evidence exists and the conversations exhaust me and the lack of progress wears me down. If white America will not heed the words of those of us trying in earnest to dress and heal the festering wound of racism in this country, let them suffer the follies of their ignorance. As African American lesbian and gay folk, our responsibility must be in creating a community for ourselves, capable of sustaining our social, financial, and spiritual wants, needs, and aspirations. The time is past due for us to start those conversations which will bring about the action necessary to sustain the daily realities of those of us living under the multiple threats of homophobia, racism, and, for lesbians, sexism. And, lest any of us are confused, I am talking about the collective us be 'us' black or white, gay or non gay, man or woman because, potentially, we are each participants in one another's realities.

I am reminded of the great James Baldwin's words in The Fire Next Time, "If we and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in a song by a slave, is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!"

"Racism Under the Rainbow" is a three part series.

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HEALTH

LESBIAN HEALTH: BREAST CANCER

by Leonard Jack, Jr., Ph.D.

Breast Cancer is the most common non-skin cancer among women in the United States and several other Western countries. Increase public concern has given this disease considerable media attention. According to the American Cancer Society, an estimated 182,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer will occur in 1995 among women and about 1,400 new cases among men. The National Cancer Institute reports that with the exception of lung cancer, breast cancer causes more deaths than any other cancer in women. Clinical trials have supported the need for early detection and intervention on all levels. Data generated in noted trials regarding the use of mammography validate their use as a necessary intervention to help save lives from breast cancer. These facts alone make breast cancer an important issue for women, their partners, family members, friends and health care providers.

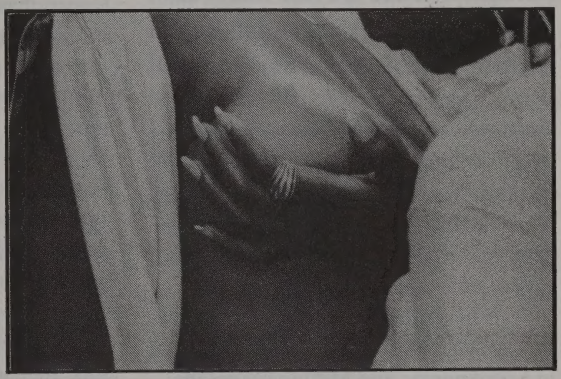

Photo by Sheila Robinson

Preliminary data for 1992 suggest that mortality (death) is falling among White women, however, this is not the case for African-American women. It is postulated that African-American women are diagnosed in later stages. This maybe due to African-American women not seeking clinical breast examination and / or recommended mammography screening. There appear to be a number of factors that contribute to a higher incidence of breast cancer among African-American women. Specific to lesbians, breast cancer rates in the United States have generated concern according to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Washington, D.C. For the purpose of this article, the word lesbian will be used to reference women whose emotional,

social and sexual relationships are primarily with other women, regardless of their public identity. Some lesbians feel sexual identity in and of itself has been a major barrier to seeking and receiving health care in the United States.

Currently, many lesbians find it difficult to "come out" to health care providers about their sexuality, hence are less likely than heterosexuals to seek and maintain routine medical physicals and screening.

Thus, fear about health care provider reaction is a major concern for lesbians when deciding to seek medical attention. This has major implications on breast cancer rates among lesbians.

In addition, breast cancer risk factors prevalent among lesbians surveyed in Los Angeles and Michigan include:

1) higher incidence of nuliparity (never bearing children)

2) possible higher incidence of delayed childbearing

3) increased alcohol consumption

4) increase cigarette use (associated with increased breast cancer mortality)

5) less likely to perform regular breast self-exam

A current document entitled " "Breast and Cervical Cancer Among Lesbians and Women Who Partner with Women: Information and Resources" states that the majority of women diagnosed have no identified risk other than age — making regular screening and early detection, along with treatment important for all women. Lesbians must ask their provider about signs and symptoms associated with breast cancer and determine screening routine based on family history, sexuality, lifestyle and current health status.

Traditional signs and symptoms of breast cancer include abnormal signs of cancerous growth on a mammogram; breast changes (such as a lump, thickening, swelling, dimpling, skin irritation, distortion, retraction, scaliness, pain, tenderness of the nipple, or nipple discharge). These signs and symptoms should be brought to the attention of a physician. The absence of these symptoms does not mean routine screening should be abandon. The American Cancer Society warns that since adult women may not be able to alter their personal risk factors greatly, the best current opportunity to detect breast cancer is through early detection.

Early detection has meant many things to many people. Considerable controversy around when mammography screening should take place has gained media attention and rightfully so. The American Cancer Society recommends that asymptomatics, (having no signs or symptoms), should have a mammogram every 1-2 years; women age 50 and over should have a mammograpm every year. In addition, a clinical physical examination of the breast is recommended every three years for women 20 to 40, and every year for those over 40.

Mammography is recognized as a valuable diagnostic technique for women who have findings suggestive of breast cancer. When a woman has a suspicious lump, mammography can help determine if there are other lesions too small

to be felt in the same or opposite breast. Since a small percentage of breast cancers may not be seen on a mammogram, all suspicious lumps should be biopsied for a definitive diagnosis, even when current or recent mammography findings are described as normal.

ACS also recommends monthly breast self-examination as a routine good health habit for women 20 years or older. This will give women an opportunity to become both familiar and comfortable examining their breasts. Breast self-examination should be performed every month at the same time. You may want to chose an important date (e.g., birthday, graduation day, anniversary, etc.) to perform breast self-exmaination monthly. A buddy approach has also been suggested with regard to monthly self-examination to help ensure consistnet practice.

Remember, self-breast examination alone can not replace either mammography and clinical breast examination by a trained health care provider.

Survival rates for breast cancer have improved greatly over the last ten years due largely to early detection and advances in medical treatment. Treatment options are determined based on the patient's preferences and medical advice given by health care providers. Treatment may require lumpectomy, (local removal of the tumor), mastectomy, (surgical removal of the breast), radiation therapy, chemotherapy, or hormone manipulation therapy. It is not uncommon to have one or more of these options utilized in combination. A major concern among women regardless of sexuality has been the appearance of the breast after surgery. Hence, reconstruction and cosmetic restoration options have become a very critical part of the treatment process.

Finally, like any other disease, support from family, friends and health care providers are very important in the recovery and life-long process of survivorship. Survivorship is just a s important as treatment. According to the American Cancer Society, "Current data indicate that 63% of women diagnosed with breat cancer survive 10 years and 56% survive 15 years or more". Relevant to these figures is the underlining fact that early detection, clinical diagnosis, quality treatment and support from partner, family, friends and health care provider help increase quality of life and years of survivorship.

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A GRANDMOTHER'S LOVE

I could tell you that I am a forty year old grandmother who tested positive for the HIV virus in December 1991, or I could tell you that I love my only child who is 21 and both of my grandchildren ages two and four. I could talk about how important they are to me and they are...but that's not what I want to talk about.

I want to talk about a young woman who I love very much. Her name is Stephanie and I call her young because, unlike me, she has never experienced life. When I met Stephanie I didn't like her very much. She was a school teacher from Chicago who, because she had went to all white schools, including college, never had any black friends and, Horror of Horrors, ...she was a virgin at thirty-five. Her mother was still living at the time and she hated me on sight, but then she hated anyone who seemed to be a threat to her control of her only child. We met through a mutual friend and when our friend died in September of '91 from cancer, I left New York heartbroken and went to see my only link to the person who had been my only friend. We stopped our mutual dislike for one another and became friends. She even went with me to hold my hand when I went for testing, assuring me that I would be negative. For two weeks I agreed with her, but inside I knew. You just couldn't live as I had prior to 1986 and expect not to have "the package". From March '86 through December '91 I had been totally celibate. No sex, no drugs, no drinking or smoking.

On January 11, 1992 my test came back positive. That night Stephanie and I became lovers. It wasn't until my doctor told me that I had an STD, that I carried it around since 1986 and had passed on to Stephanie, that I began to worry. The fear of dying was past, the fear of killing someone was not, and still is not.

I couldn't live with knowing that someone I loved so very much would die because of me. At the time she didn't care because her mother had passed and I was all she had. Whenever I would caution her or tell her that she might want to marry and raise a family, she would always say, "I'll never marry anyone but you, and when you die, so will I." I wanted her to live and so I ended our relationship. I'm in Savannah and she's in Chicago with a new husband (who hates my guts) and gets tested every six months. On the 13 of May, I received a letter from her stating that she's finally ready to let go. Now the selfish part of me says, "YOU CAN'T, NOT NOW!", but the part that loves her says, "Good-bye Baby, have a long and healthy life." Unlike many other lesbians, I choose to acknowledge the truth of HIV transmission through female to female sex.

Due to the myth that we are God's Chosen, and cannot transmit the virus of AIDS to our partners, we too are now facing a shorter life span. HEY LADIES! Wake up and smell the coffee! Very few women are going to tell you BEFORE bedding you that they have tested positive! The stigma still exists! If you or your partner has ever had an STD, and neither of you sleep with males, (or even if you do), allow common sense to prevail. HIV and AIDS are also sexually transmitted diseases like "Clap" and "Syph". So unless you are like the majority of teens in this nation...do something about saving your life, and the life of your partner(s).

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SPIRITUALITY

"WHEN ALL HEAVEN BREAKS LOOSE"

by Kamau Ifoma

A friend shared an experience with me recently, it goes something like this. He was visiting a church in suburban Atlanta. The service opened with the traditional prayers and announcements. The visitors were acknowledged. And then the choir came up and sang. And oh boy did they "sang". By this time the energy was high and all heaven was breaking loose. Now it was the ministers time. With the Spirit high and energy flowing he got up and began to deliver his message. For whatever reason this was the day that he decided to do his "gay bashing" sermon. Now, just as he really began to get into it the cover to the piano slammed down. The Choir Director stood up and declared, "There will be no more music today." He then proceeded to exit the sanctuary. Not only did he leave, the entire tenor section of the choir marched right behind him. As they all were filing through the door one of the matured sisters of the church stood up, looked at the minister, with finger pointing and head rocking she said, "See dare you done hurt those boys feelins!" Upon hearing this story I cheered with the greatest of joy. The good sistah made a choice to join the choir director and the tenor section by standing for the truth as they know it to be. They determined that they did not have to accept someone else's teaching and they let it be known.Around the world, Sunday after Sunday, the "gay/lesbian bashing sermon" is delivered with the greatest of ease. In my opinion the sermon itself is not the crime, the true crime is that so many gays and lesbians allow themselves to just sit and listen. Embarrassed, hoping nobody suspects them. And just wanting the minister to hurry up and let it be over. It's not like any of us are forced to attend any particular place of worship. Or that we are shackled to the seat once we get there. At least not literally. And yet we say amen in all the right places, scream and shout with the best of them and thank the minister for the slap in the face as we are leaving.

Photo by Ron Singleton

"But Kamau, my making a stand isn't going to change anything OR It's really nobody's business what I do in my bedroom." These are responses that I get from many when this subject comes up. Now I firmly believe that everyone has the opportunity to discover their own truth, within the quietness of their own soul. I am also aware of the world that we live in where we have been taught to give this responsibility to mediators. Someone who has been trained or ordained to know more or better than we do. Someone whom we have been told has a closer connection to the God within us than we do. If it is your choice to allow someone else to decide what you believe, does it make good sense to also give them license to Spiritually, mentally/emotionally or physically beat you up?

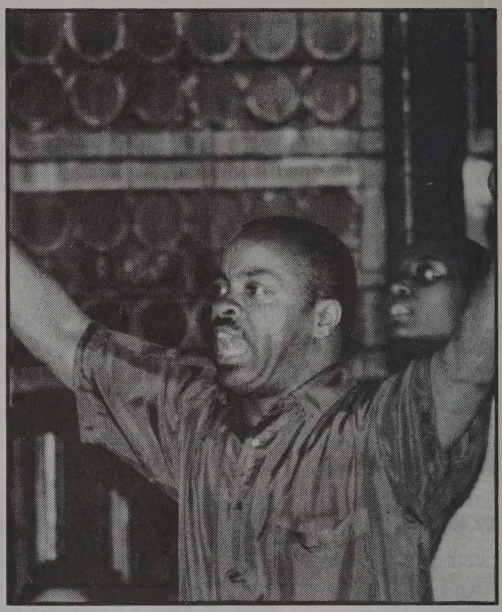

Photo by Ron Singleton

Another acquaintance allowed me to read a letter that he had written to one of our more "prominent" ministers in the Atlanta area. He was visiting the church with a friend on a Sunday when they had a guest speaker. Well, the guest speaker decided to use this platform as an opportunity to do the same abomination sermon. In my friends disgust he did not walk out of the church, instead he decided to write a letter to the minister. In the letter he very eloquently explained his disappointment in the guest minister being allowed to teach this message. Especially when there is such a large gay/lesbian participation in the church. He also pointed out how theologically and historically incorrect the guest minister had been in his teaching. You see, my friend is also an educated, ordained minister. He made a decision to let it be known that he does not accept this teaching. He was not as comfortable as the choir director and his tenors section in expressing his position in front of the entire congregation. And still he stood for his truth in a way that was comfortable for him.

There is an old saying that says, "if you believe you are a sinner, damned to hell ...you are." The essence of this statement is that when you believe that you are Divine, blessed to an eternity of bliss ...you are. I do not wish to give much credit to the lessons of those who choose to teach the abomination theories. On the contrary, I bless them and give thanks for all that they are as a physical expression in this Divine world. They have just as much of an opportunity to decide what their truth is as we do.

In her new book, "Transform Your Life", Atlanta minister Dr. Barbara King says that we should stop spending

so much time questioning "why me lord" and begin declaring "Try Me Lord!" I constantly ask the God of my being to "Reveal your truth to me in a way that I can understand and use it for the betterment of myself and all the world. Direct me in my Spiritual unfoldment so that I can feel comfortable in all that I am." You see I believe that everyone has a direct connection with the Divine Creator. It doesn't take that mediator for us to receive the "Word of Spirit." Believe me your creator speaks directly to you. It never made sense to me that God would tell someone else what is best for me when God, in Its Omnipotence (all Power), could speak it directly to me. Once I learned to get still (with my emotions and disbeliefs) and go directly to the Source, God's ever presence revealed Itself/Himself/Herself to me.

The more you practice your connection with Divine Oneness the more often the answers will come even before the questions.

I join with those who have stood on their truth as it has been given through them. I take my hat off to the choir director, all the tenors, the good sistah, the writer of the letter and all those who constantly acknowledge their place in this Spiritual Universe. When you know who you are you live in a world where all is Divine, blessed to an eternity of bliss. And in an eternity of bliss ALL HEAVEN BREAKS LOOSE.

Kamau Ifoma is a freelance writer and founder of Homefree Ministry in Atlanta.

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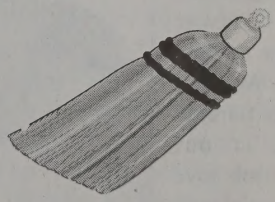

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NO TIME FOR THE RELATIONSHIP AND NO TIME FOR YOU:

EXAMINING YOUR PARTNER'S INVOLVEMENT IN OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

by Carla Anderson, MA

When we think about the possibility of our partner being unfaithful to us and our relationship, different scenarios may come to mind. We may envision the woman at the bookstore who gives our partner the eyes or the guy who calls the house and never leaves a message. We fight just as fiercely if it is our lover's job, love of material possessions, chemical dependency or social involvement that take him or her from our arms? Or, do we just sit silently in our anger, waiting for our pain to be noticed? How many of us are aware that our partner's involvement / addiction with an outside entity can have the same damaging effect as an affair?

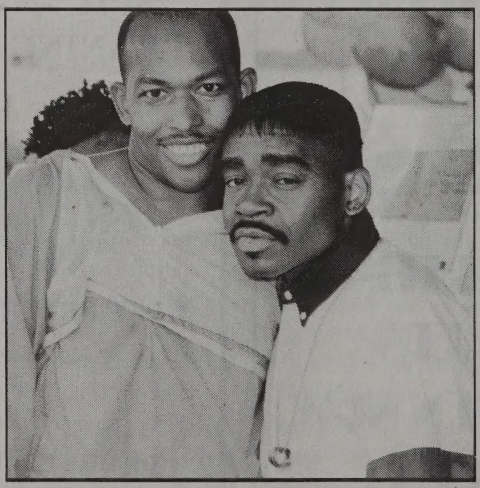


Photo by Ron Singleton

Let us begin by examining some common signs that our partner has or is developing an interest in something other than us. One initial sign is a diminished investment and commitment of time in the relationship. Despite having a conflicting or hectic schedule, many couples make it a point to schedule time together that takes into account both partners needs and wants. Even if that special time is not very frequent, the commitment is

there and neither individual feels ignored or neglected. However, do find that your leather day planner has more "white-out" covered dates than actual events? If this is occurring consistently, and your requests for more time are either being flat-out ignored or conveniently falls off your partner's priority list, your lover is letting you know that time for the relationship may not be first and foremost for him or her.

Another sign is your partner's inability to stop "spending money" or pocket change. If their financial picture has suddenly turned gray, despite continuing to work at the same job or even a better one, they may be pouring money into an activity you which you were not informed. Bar hopping, checking out the clubs and meeting friends for drinks begins to cost if it becomes an addiction. Increased alcohol consumption, marijuana smoking or abuse of other chemicals usually demands more monetary investment over time as our bodies crave more of the same to get the same "buzz". Being draped in the latest fashion or having that couch featured in "Architectural Digest" will strain most of our budgets. As with any relationship, one has to invest more in it as time passes. Note these addictions do evolve into relationships. If we examine four of the most common areas that one could become addicted to, it may become clear why it is similar to our partner having an affair with someone versus something.

Most of us work. However, some of us, due to our community activities, our spiritual pursuits or our sports / hobby related activities, end up with very little free time. On the other hand, the workaholic is typically engaging in many long hours at the office or store for reasons other than to improve their quality of life.

For some, work may become a safe haven from the relationship itself or hot issues that have begun to surface in the relationship.

Issues such as fear of intimacy, decreased or lack of communication, decreased sexual attraction to our partner, increased conflicts and arguments over small things and lack of fulfillment of one's needs and wants. These issues alone or in bunches may make the office more appealing. This is especially the case if one is being constantly reinforced at work, through bonuses, praise and promotions. One begins to find their sense of belongingness in their job, almost similar to one of the reasons why our youth may choose gang involvement. We are, for the most part, social creatures who are taught that home is where we find our happiness. But, for some of us, if our home contains someone who is supposed to be our lover yet they do not know us and we do not want to know them anymore, then we take the long way home. Couple this with an inability to want to face the relationship issues, then you have someone who has the potential to hide in their work for years at a time.

Workaholism may then transform into an entity onto itself. Trying to schedule time with our partner may leave us feeling that our lover is more attracted to their work than us.

WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE?

*"What's Going On In your Life?" is a column directed toward a more positive understanding of the issues and concerns you may encounter in day to day living; whether that be job, relationships or individual personal goals..**So tell us - What's going on in your life?.***

Dear Geanie,

I'm a 25 year old gay man who's been involved with a 31 year old man for 4 months. My new date does not see himself in a long term relationship with a man, but he wants to be with me. He wants to get married and have children. He gets close, then he runs, and this cycle affects me deeply. I think it's FEAR, and I'm not sure how to deal with this. We've broken it off one million times already.

How do I end this? Should I stay or should I go? I don't want to end it just yet. How do I deal with this?

Signed,
Lonely Heart

Dear Lonely Heart,

There are just a few areas in this relationship where one might be tempted to read between the lines, ride upon potentials and even harbor false hope.

However, it is important that you listen to what this man is telling you.

He says that he does NOT want a long term relationship with you, A MAN, because he plans to marry (and I can only infer that this means a woman) and have children.

Whether this becomes true or not; this man is telling you "up front" not or put a great deal of faith toward holding on to him. The relationship is beginning with distance in mind.

You are dealing with a man who has not accepted himself nor you as viable or valid as a twosome.

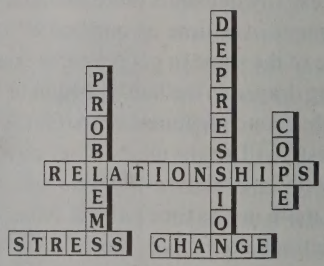
The respect and regard for this relationship is already "one-down". If you continue in it then you can expect to be treated thusly, whether that be knowingly or unknowingly by this person.

The questions you must, therefore, ask yourself are:

A. Is this relationship worth a cost of my self esteem?

B. Am I willing to be a "temporary" or "in the shadows" involvement?

When Life Becomes A Puzzle...



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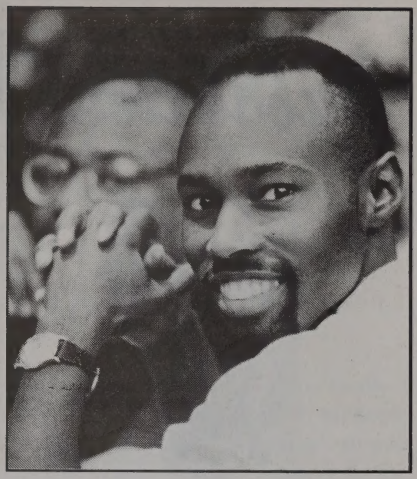
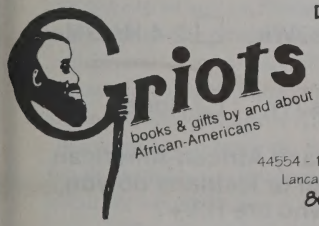
PROFILE OF A MAN

Name:
Marlon Hines
Age:
28
Status:
"Sort of Single"
Career:
Contract Specialist
Hometown:
Newnan, GA
Latest Book Read:
"Bullet Proof Diva: Tales of Race, Sex, and Hair"
by Lisa Jones



Marlon enjoys tennis, bowling and listening to music in his spare time. He is planning to go to law school next fall.



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Survey

1) Are you familiar with African-American AIDS Organizations in your area?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2) Have you ever donated money or goods to an African-American AIDS Organization?

☐ Yes ☐ No

3) How often do you volunteer for any nonprofit organization?

☐ 2-4 Hrs./Wk. ☐ 2-4 Hrs./Mo.

☐ 2-4 Hrs./Yr. ☐ None

4) How many African-American gay men or lesbians do you know who are HIV+?

☐ 1 - 4 ☐ 5 - 9 ☐ more than 10

5) If you were available to donate your time, what type skills do you have to give?

☐ Legal Advice ☐ Entertainer ☐ Promoter

☐ Domestic/Housekeeper ☐ Administrative/Organizer

☐ Medical/Psychological ☐ Driver/Deliveries

☐ Telephone/Interviewer ☐ Accounting

☐ Cook ☐ Builder/Handyman/woman

See page 45 for a list of African-American AIDS organizations who need your help now.

LIKE THAT

by Dr. Shirlene Holmes

In every family there is someone like that.

And you recognize it early. I always thought my cousin Linda was like that. She wasn't like the other women in the family. Neither was her brother Mercer; he was like that, too. At our annual Fourth of July family reunion barbecues, everyone whispered about it.

When I was a young child, Cousin Linda was a rugged teenager. She was not like the rest of us girls. She didn't wear lace, nor have to sit still on flowered couches and not get dirty. She romped wildly with the boy cousins and teased us playfully, gently touching our faces and kissing our hands. I never remember any of the grown folks in the family asking her to leave the room or treating her like a child. You just couldn't; something about her wouldn't allow it. She was like that.

No one picked on Cousin Linda about it, but Mercer was teased a lot. From his hair to his shoes, he was like that and all the grownups and kids in the family reminded him of it. The way he held his fork and sipped his kool-aid at the barbecue just irritated most of our boy cousins, aunts and uncles. He seemed to hold everything with too much grace and daintiness for a male. Aunt Mamie's grandson, Lamont, who was six times his size, would just punch Mercer in the chest all the time, trying to make a man out of him. Us girls would cry with Mercer, who'd fall backwards and look near death every time. That went on at our reunion barbecues for years until Cousin Linda bust Lamont's ass in front of the entire family. I don't think Lamont came back to our house for another reunion until he was grown with two kids of his own. Aunt Mamie's daughter, Faydonna, sucked her teeth at Linda, glad that at least Lamont wasn't like that.

As I got older, I could tell even more that Cousin Linda was like that. She showed up for our cookouts too dressed up: cuff links in her sleeves, black pants on. She never called them slacks like she was supposed to.

Shoes shined and buffed, her nails freshly manicured and painted with clear polish. And each hair permed and laid with Nu Nile close to her head. She was too bright and smiley. This made her suspicious to me. She wasn't like her sister, Pauline and Beatrice who'd lost their smiles years before, after getting married and giving birth.

Cousin Linda seemed to have a smirk on her face all the time as if she know something the rest of us didn't know. As if she had recently experienced pleasure or knew exactly where to find it if she needed another good feeling. She was truly the life of every family reunion barbecue we had. And we had plenty with loud music, tons of food and laughter. They were held at our house because it had a huge yard and Momma wouldn't have it any other way.

When Booker T. & the MG's "Time is Tight" was playing, Cousin Linda always grabbed one of the family rejects like Fayrella, Uncle Raymond and Faydonna's fat adopted daughter, and just danced her up and down the drive way. Fayrella smiled till she dribbled and drooled; that's the only time she seemed to come out of her shell, when Cousin Linda danced her around. She just loved Cousin Linda, but I guess Fayrella must have been like that, too. No one knows because she had a heart attack and died right after she graduated from high school.

Cousin Linda was very peculiar to me. She had what looked like a mustache and no one said anything about it. Not even Aunt Mamie, who makes it a hobby to mind family folds' business. Once when Cousin Linda stayed overnight at our house (of course I kept my bedroom door locked and couldn't sleep all that night), I caught her in the mirror in my parents' room running an eyebrow pencil across her top lip and down her chin. When she caught me staring, she just winked; I ran to my bedroom and slammed the door! I could hear Momma shouting up from the kitchen, "Linda, what you laughing at so hard?????"

After that, I knew Cousin Linda was like that and it was confirmed when she showed up at the reunion barbecue in 1976 with her "friend" Precious. Me and Valerie and Carla and Necee just sat and watched. Necee was quick to say how cousin Linda's "friend" was so pretty, all dolled up in her hot paints suit, platform shoes and Afro Puffs. And she, neither Carla nor Valerie thought Precious was like that, even I asked them. But they couldn't convince me. I knew something was going on. Cousin Linda was too attentive, too protective, too satisfied.

Aunt Mamie smelled something right away. She didn't want to fix Precious a plate, but Aunt Vi wasn't gonna have no impoliteness to guests. She steered Precious right to the grill and had her point to just the piece of chicken she wanted. Cousin Linda couldn't keep her eyes off Precious, and later in the afternoon I saw her face tighten with jealousy when our Uncle Junie started rapping to Precious.

Uncle Junie knew Cousin Linda was like that, that's why he was hitting on Precious so hard in the first place, sneaking up to the sweet creature and wrapping his crusty dark arm around her tiny exposed waist.

Half mad, Cousin Linda got herself a drink, Barcardi 151. You had to be there. If is wasn't for Mercer taking Cousin Linda for a walk, Uncle Junie might of been celebrating his last Fourth of July that year.

Precious was nice enough, smiling and giggling all day long. All the girl cousins were happy to meet her and touch her and ask her how she got her skin to be so shiny and soft. She confessed to us she sold Avon and used that blue bottled bath oil every day. Carla and Necee smiled all over themselves. Cousin Linda kept edging in our conversations, checking up on what we were talking about. She didn't know if one of us was like that or not and she didn't want to have no trouble.

I noticed that Precious had a wide mouth and it started to upset me. I found myself looking her over a little hard. It made me tingle. I ran in the house, into my bedroom. I didn't want anybody to think I was like that.

My family folks talked about people who was like that. Everybody was scared of them or hated them and spread rumors about them. Let Aunt Mamie tell it: "Cousin Linda was always breaking up somebody's home or talking some young girl into having somebody's baby for her. "That gal, Lanie done got pregnant two times 'cause Linda told her to. Now Linda ain't decent enough to own na'a one of them chu'lins." She even said Cousin Linda had gone for shock treatments so she would stop being like that, but it wasn't working. Aunt Mamie was telling

folks that, in her pants, Cousin Linda was really a man and was just fooling the family living as a woman. Aunt Vi stopped speaking to Aunt Mamie for years over that.

When Aunt Vi, that's Cousin Linda and Mercer's mother, heard family folks whispering, she'd just say real loudly, for Aunt Mamie's benefit, "Leave my babies alone! I birthed them both. I know what they got in their pants."

And the whispering stopped because no one wanted to deal with Aunt Vi's wrath. She had a reputation for using a butcher knife or a gun, especially when it came to her seven kids. She'd cut her husband, Henry, after catching him pulling Renee's drawers down. Renee was one of the foster kids that they had taken in. If she cut Henry over a foster child, no telling what she'd do over one of her natural borns.

By the time I was in my teens and saw cousin Linda again, she had been stationed in California for a while. She hadn't changed. Her brother Mercer had gone to the Air Force to have a man made out of him. Linda had gone to the Marines. That time when I saw her, I remember everything about her being perfect; her teeth, her starched and creased clothes, her nails, her words. She brought the beauty to that sunny holiday, the way she cocked her head to the side and licked her lips so they wouldn't dry. It was another Fourth of July. She was helping Lamont haul in the beer and soda for the family reunion barbecue, a L&M Red dangling limp and white from her dark lips. She was like that. Still. I could tell.

Between sips of Cutty Sark she talked about boot camp and how many places she had been since then. She bragged about all the good loving she was getting, but she wouldn't say from who. Me, Necee, Valerie and Carla wanted to know real bad, but wouldn't ask. She had a gold chain around her neck with a woman's ruby birthstone ring on it, but she wouldn't say nothing. I wanted desperately to know who this "ruby" was and what she was doing so right that Linda felt compelled to chain a part of her around her throat.

Aunt Mamie finally got it said. "Whose ring is that, Linda Ruth?"

"It's my ring, Mamie."

Us girls snickered, our bellies tightened flat. No one under her age ever addressed Aunt Mamie without using a title first. That day, Cousin Linda was our hero. Aunt Mamie didn't ask again, she just turned abruptly in her squealing lawn chair, fixed her wig with her free hand, and sucked that remaining flesh from her barbecued chicken bone.

Later that night, like always, all the cousins paired and tripled off to go talk and.....reunite. Carla had this thing going with Clayton. Valerie and Necee both were crazy about DeMichael Anthony, so they all went to sit on the stoop to hold hands and flirt. I just kept to myself busy cleaning up.

The sun was setting slow and pretty. Everyone would gather soon to shoot off firecrackers and spin steel wool. I was wiping off the red and white plastic table cloth when Cousin Linda came over. I see her, still smiling, out of the corner of my eye. Tall, a runner's body. Handsome. And clean, as if she hadn't been dancing every girl cousin and aunt, even Mamie, around the yard.

"So Sheena, how old are you now?" my cousin asked.

"Old enough to eat my cornbread and black-eye peas without choking?" I said back, feeling something funny inside, knowing I was writing a check I couldn't cash.

"You must be legal now, 18, right?"

"Yeah, what about it?" I answered much too silly and quick.

My throat was real dry. I scrubbed the table cloth hard.

"What you doing out here by yourself cleaning for? It's the 4th, baby; you should be off with the others."

"No, that's all right. I promised Momma I'd help clean up."

"Well, let me help you," she said, collecting up debris from the grass near the table.

The Godfather was squealing in the background: "I got that feeling, baby!!!!" Cousin Linda bopped and swayed, popping her polished fingers loudly to the beat.

My gaze fixed on her as she had her way with the music, kicking a leg here, raising an arm there. Howling, her red tongue hanging out in ecstasy...good God!

"BABY BABY BABY!.....BABY BABY BABY!.....I GOT THAT FEELING....COME ON NOW!!!!!

She started to spin, her pelvis pushing against the evening, her head thrown back.

I stared long after her dance and the record stopped.

She was quiet. Me too.

Then breaking the silence in half, she said, while reaching for the cloth I had in my hand, "You looking so fine." Taking the words right out of my mouth.

I dropped the cloth. We both bent down to get it from under the table. Our eyes met. Then our lips.

She grinned, gave me the rag, walked down the drive way, got in her car and drove.... I ran into the house and locked myself in the bathroom.

Maybe I was like that

I jumped in the shower, hot as I could stand it and tried to burn off the feeling. Through the window I could hear the family talking downstairs: Uncle Junie, with his drunk self, shouting at Faydonna, "Goddamn, baby, come on; shake it but don't break it!!!"

Lamont and Clayton setting up the fireworks; "Man, gimme that damn thing 'fore you hurt yourself!" And Aunt Vi and them were having a serious game of bid wiss: "Clubs, my ass, you better bow down to this trump card, shit!" Daddy was sitting in his favorite lawn chair trying to talk some sense in DeMichael, who was now named Rasheed Rahim. "Boy, I'm telling you that Elijah Muhammad ain't shit. You better realize what the bible say. JESUS IS THE ANSWER, and ain't no Allah gonna save none of ya'll damn bean pie selling Muslims from hellfire!"

I rubbed the soap deeply into my skin. I could feel the steam frizzing my hair, but I stayed there until my skin squeaked clean. Every time I say Cousin Linda after that, it wasn't the same. I kept avoiding her till later that night when she grabbed my arm saying. "Sheena, why you running from me? I ain't gonna hurt you, girl." And she kissed me again. Like that.

I couldn't tell nobody. Not even Necee who was my ace boon coon at the time. I didn't even want to write it in my diary in case Momma was snooping around and found it. I was in my room thinking thoughts like that when I heard Momma scream up to my bedroom window, "Sheena! Girl, we gonna cut the watermelon; bring me my knife!!! Sheena! Linda go on up and find Sheena. Tell her I need my butcher knife out the kitchen."

I sweated and scrambled around my room. Buttoning up my blouse, zipping my jeans, I heard the knock, but I couldn't move to the door. Another knock.

"Open this door, Sheena. Your Momma wants her knife."

"It's in the kitchen."

"Tell me something I don't know, like when you gonna open this door."

I did it. Opened the door. She was there. Neatly together. Smiling cocking her permed head to the side, sipping from her cup. She moved to come in.

"No...I'm coming down."

"Your eyes look like they gonna pop out, Sheena."

"Why you kiss me like that?"

"Why'd you let me?"

"I'm scared of you."

"No, you scared of yourself. Don't worry; I'm not a thief. I only take what's given.

And with that Cousin Linda turned and went back outside. I saw her from the window, winking up at me. I laid light headed back across the bed, mad that she affected me like that.

I stayed away from the barbecues and my cousin a long time. I ran away, putting 2 or 3 states between me and the family every holiday. Momma fussed, but I had so many excuses she finally left me alone about it. I heard a lot about my cousin over the years through Momma: how she was living in Phoenix with a white woman or in Minnesota with a girl half her age. I always pressed Momma for details after the reunions: who did Cousin Linda have with her, in what ear was she wearing her earring. Did she still have on expensive shoes.

And this morning, Momma was telling that Cousin Linda is living with an old big bosomed evangelist in a house they own in Washington DC. Aunt Mamie has already tried to get them both put out of the church about it, but hasn't succeeded yet.

And me, I'm standing here cutting up the fixings for potato salad for the annual family barbecue reunion tomorrow, my permed head cocked to the side, my girlfriend's ring on my neck and a smile on my face just like that.

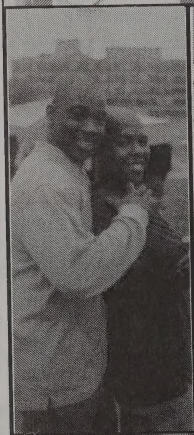
Dr. Shirlene Holmes is Assistant Professor of Communications at Georgia State University.

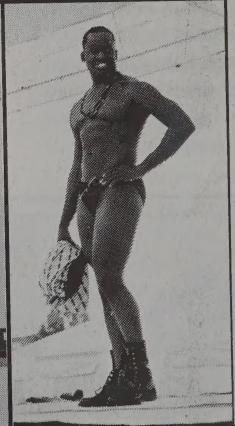
Photo by Gregory Victorianne

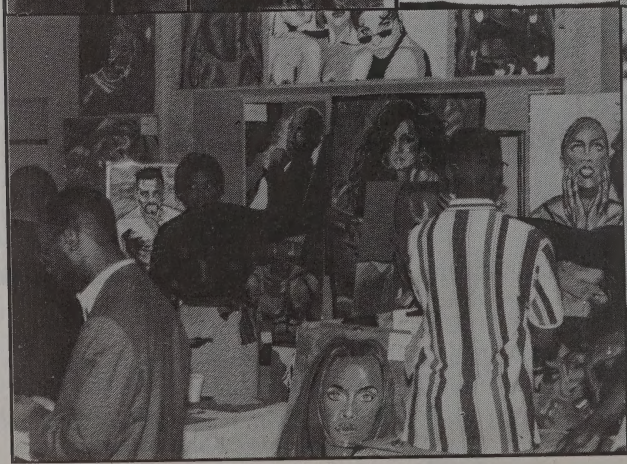
Pictured (L to R): MOCAA's Board Member Gary Daffin, MOCAA's Director Michael Richmond, Author E. Lynn Harris, Arnold Sapenter, MOCAA's Summer Youth Internship Coordinator, and Stephen Tierney, MOCAA Board Member.

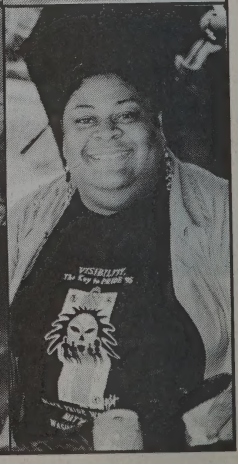
Boston - Men of Color Against AIDS. Inc. recently hosted an evenong reception with E. Lynn Harris, author of "Just As I Am" and "Invisible Life" at the G.L.A.S.S. Youth Center during Boston's Gay Pride Week. E. Lynn read excerpts from his forthcoming book, "And This Too Shall Pass", scheduled for March 1996.

SCENES FROM D.C.'S BLACK GAY PRIDE '95









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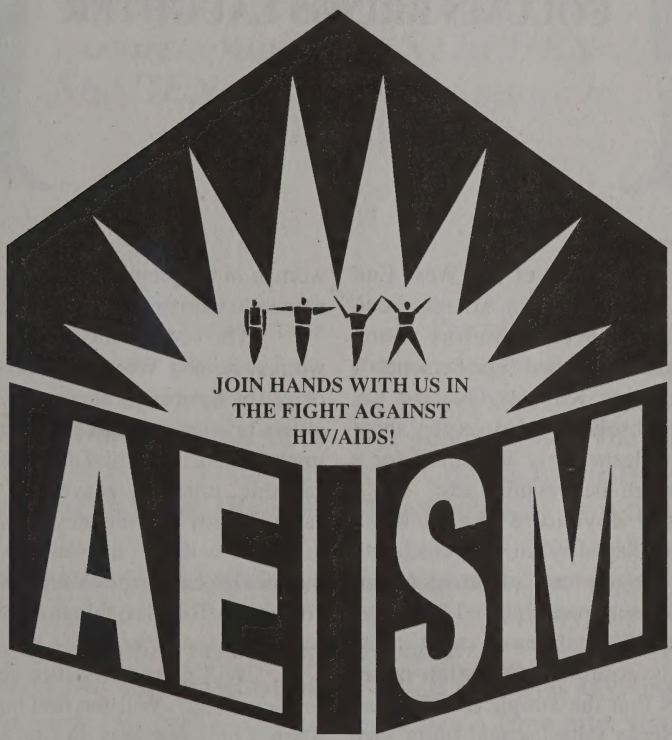

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"The Personals"

COLUMN BRINGS LAUGHTER

by AJ

The walls of the West End Cultural Arts Theatre in Atlanta shook with laughter as Comfort Zone Productions performed "The Personals". Writer/director, Kimbley Gilchrist has created an absolutely hilarious play about a woman desperately searching for a mate through the classified ads.

The adventure begins when Christian, (played by Kimbley Gilchrist), ignores the obvious advances of her seductive roommate, (played by Sonya M. Hemphill), and places an ad in the personals column. Christian never imagines that the simple ad, "Nubian woman seeks same", could bring such comical complications.

The laughter begins when Christian, who anxiously anticipates love on the first date, meets rambunctious Rose Rose Sr., (played by Jane Galvin Lewis). Rose is a ranting, raving, religious fanatic in desperate need of a hairdresser. Rose bears absolutely no resemblance to the young, attractive woman in the picture she "accidentally" mailed to Christian.

The second fiasco is a neurotic woman named Whitney, convincingly played by Kimberly Pittman. Whitney fits all of Christian's qualifications except one important one. The third date is with Lady Jasmine, uniquely played by Frankie James. Lady Jasmine described herself as "every woman" and saunters through the door appearing to be Christian's dream come true. But alas, things aren't always what they appear to be.

Will Christian's dire search for love ever end? Will she find happiness? There's only one way to find out. See "The Personals". For more information call 718-802-9037.

Playwright/director Kimbley Gilchrist is a graduate of the New York University Theatre Program. She has studied playwrighting in the U.S. and Europe. She is currently working on a script for production this fall entitled "A Midsummer Dyke's Dream".

"CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT"

Opening in Los Angeles' Ebony Showcase Theatre, "Children Of The Night" is presented by ***STANLEY BENNETT CLAY;*** *written, conceived, directed and choreographed by* ***STEPHEN SEMIEN,*** *with original music by* ***BYRON SMITH.***

The Los Angeles Times' stage review reveals that "Children" attacks homophobia in high style.

The 14 member cast bobs with waves of talent; among the most striking is Larry (Bobcat) Jeffries. Adorned in a black slip, wig and high heels, he unfurls the incandescent song, "Miss It", which may be the first musical explanation of why some macho conditioned men can make love to other men only as long as they're in drag. Jeffries' next mercurially materializes into an intimidating dude who looks as if he just stepped off a diesel truck. Basic to all these performers, and emblematic of Semien's dance background, is their skill with body language.

The second act takes a detour to a neighborhood church with the gospel-soaring, golden-robed cast pumping out "The Blood of Jesus", (music by the New Jersey Mass Choir), led by a ringing exhortation for tolerance delivered in the manner of a verbal pinwheel by Michael Neal's hyperventilating reverend.

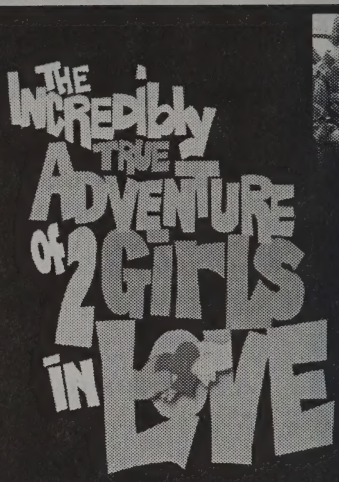
If Semien is anything, he's a showman. Time after time, most hilariously in a number between two little girls playing hopscoth and marbles and talking about sex in the dumb, uncomprehending way children do, the show makes a scalding statement about sexual bigotry while making sure to entertain you first.

"An intensely romantic comedy. Imagine 'Pretty In Pink' with lesbians."
ESQUIRE, *Joseph Hooper*

NEWSWEEK
"First love, straight or gay, has rarely been so expertly enacted."
David Ansen

BOSTON GLOBE
"Fresh & endearing, as much acoming-of-age story as aromantic comedy."
Jay Carr

OUT MAGAZINE
"An awkwardly charming teen lovestory. An incredibly likable feature."
Lawrence Chua



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ON ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY NITE LIFE

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PEARL GARDEN	111 Luckie St. (404) 524-0036	Thurs.	Men 95% Women 5%	R&B Show
THE MARQUETTE LOUNGE	M.L. King Jr. Dr. (404) 525-7677	Sat.	Men 50% Women 50% Show	Top 40 R&B
LORETTA'S	708 Spring St. (404) 874-8125	Fri., Sat.	Men 60% Women 40%	House

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Specialized addictive disease & psychiatric services for gay & lesbian individuals

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- Covered by Most Insurances

Service Directors
R. Michael Prudent, M.D.
Linda S. Wilson, Ph.D.

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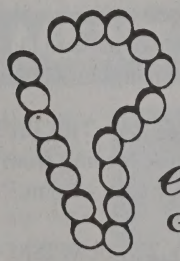


THE earl GARDEN

MON - FRI
BAR BRAND SPECIAL
TUES
OLDIES NITE
THURS FEMALE ILLUSION
'NIESHA DUPREE'
111 Luckie St.
ATLANTA
404-524-0036

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JULY

Sunday July, 2 - Annual July 4th Picnic in Candler Park (McClendon Ace. east of Little Fice Points) at 4 p.m. Meet by the pool. Call (404) 908-7371 for more information.

Thursday, July 13 - Charis: Books and More. 1189 Euclid avenue, Atlanta. AFRIKAN ALKHEMY: Spiritual and Soul Transformation in America. Gwynelle reads her book "Afrikan Alkhemy" in which she suggests that African-Americans are a "new species". She states that because "we carry genetic traits of two sets of forebears - Africans stolen from their homeland..." This is a reading that will prove to be enlightening as well as spiritually enriching. 404-524-0304.

Through July 13 - Each Thursday, 7:00 p.m. The African-American Amatuer Film society and West End Performing Arts Center presents various black films, $2.00 - public, 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd; for more information: (404) 818-6444

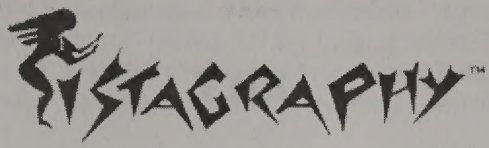
Saturday, July 22 - 7:00 p.m., Our cousin's House, Inc. cordially invite all to their Gospel Celebration in recognition of one year of serving in the HIV/AIDS community. Featured guest Evangelist, Margaret Davie, along with B. Chase Williams and Shabach. Free admission with free will offering benefiting Our Cousin's House, Inc. at Victory Baptist Church "The Temple", 1170 N. Hairston Rd., Stone Mountain, GA.

Saturday, July 22 - Venus in the House!...Fundraiser. "House Party" at the Venus Office, 616 Ormewood Ave. D.J. 10:00 p.m. - 4:00 a.m., $5.00 suggested donation, cash bar. Party all night! 2 "BID" tables. No high heels, please!

Wednesday, July 26 - TRUTH BOOKSTORE, 56 Marietta Street, Atlanta. Barbara Smith will be signing from her book, "B. Smith Entertaining & Cooking for Friends". From 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.

Thursday, July 27 - RACISM IN THE GAY/LESBIAN COMMUNITY - First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Chandler Park, 7:30 p.m. We come together with the hopes of identifying problems within our community and hopefully offering solutions as to how to start the healing process. This program is co-sponsored by the following:
Charis, The first Existentialist congregation, Fund for Southern communities, Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual Alliance of Emory, ZAMI, Hospitality Atlanta, Venus Magazine, Fourth Tuesday, Latinos en Accion, Positive Black Lesbians, Second Sunday discussion group, Black Lesbians with children, Southern voice, Outwrite Books, AALGA, Spellman college Lesbian Bisexual Alliance, Project *Open Hand, Black & White men together, AIDS Survival Project, SisterLove, Inc., Act up, Our Cousin's House, African-American Outreach.

GALLERY OPENINGS



A photographic exhibit entitled "From the Soul", which shows how African-American women photograph music, is now showing at M-Print Gallery located at 253 Trinity aveenue, SW in downtown Atlanta. The exhibit will hang in the gallery through July 21st 1995. Please call M-Print Gallery at (404) 523-4434 for more information.

The 54th Massachusettes, presented by Hammonds House,503 Peeples St. Atlanta. Showing until August 13, 1995. (404) 752-8730

Discovering *Ellis Ruley*

The works of Ellis Ruley will be presented at The High Museum of Art: Folk Art and Photography Galleries through July 22, 1995. Call (404) 522-6940

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Black Mens' Xchange (BMX) presents THE BLACK WOMEN'S XCHANGE (BWX). The BWX is African-American women who come together in a supportive environment to discuss issues related to our empowerment and the uplifting of our community. Every friday at 8:00 p.m. at the AMASSI Center, 3419 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way, Oakland CA. Contact Ms. Clydis (510) 649-0536 for more information. WE PUT BLACK LOVE INTO PRACTICE.

New Bar Opens In Washington, D.C. - Girls On The Side, which is located at 1751 Penn. Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. will have its grand opening July 1-3. Vicki Harris & Lisa Jones, partners of the bar, assure us that this will be a place for all women. The bar will be open every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday starting July 6th. The bar is also available for private parties and social events. Contact Vicki Harris for bookings at (202) 788-1866

NATIONAL EVENTS

JULY

Atlanta
Saturday, July 22 - Venus in the House!...Fundraiser. "House party at the Venus Office, 616 Ormewood Ave., SE. DJ 10:00 p.m. - 4:00 a.m. $5.00 suggested donation, cash bar. Party all night! 2 "BID" tables. No high heels please!

Los Angeles
Saturday, July 1 - ATB...At The Beach presents its 7th Annual Beach Party, $5.00. Point Dume, Malibu. 7 a.m. Hard body, sexy swimsuit, Diva contests, after party, Grand Ballroom, LA Airport Mariott. 10 p.m. - 3 a.m. $12.00.

DC
Saturday, July 1 - Come cool off in the hottest bar in DC, Wet. Join Lisa Yaya, Goldie, Tease & Hollywood from 3 p.m. - 7 p.m. (202) 468-1200.
Saturday, July 1 - "Girls on the Side", A place for all women! DC's newest addition! Located at 1751 Penn Ave., NW (Old English Lounge). For more info call Vickie (202) 788-1866.

NY
Saturday, July 15 - Simplicity attractions Unlimited cordially invite you to their first annual WHITE & GOLD YACHT PARTY! Come sail "The Diplomat" Tickets $50.00 per person. Leaving pier 84, West 43rd St. & 11th Ave. For reservations and info contact: Gretchen Young (718) 277-4575; Annette Armstrong (212) 283-1701; Marline Birkett (718) 365-2121; Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073; Mabel Thomas (718) 588-5125. It's Mabel's birthday, come join the celebration!!

Boston
July 1 - 4 - Rachel's weekend in Provincetwon. Shoreline Motel. $99. pp. (718) 471-1283.

Baltimore
Saturday, July 22 - Simplicity Attractions Unlimited presents a bus trip to Durham, NC, to celebrate the anniversary of Exclusively Esquiress. $193.00 per person. Call for info. Bobbi Moore, (301) 596-6167.

Cincinatti
July 21 - 24 - Christmas in July! Party with over 600 of the Children Sponsored by Kaptar's. For info, reservations call: Rachel's (718) 471-1283.

AUGUST

NY

Friday, August 11-13 - Sophisticated Ladies Productions - "Cruise to Nowhere" - Contact Aquonetta Wright at (718) 562-3273 or Barbara Simon (718) 562-7712

Saturday, August 19 - Crab Fest Cruise aboard the Spirit of Baltimore. DJ, buffet, open bar, all the crabs you can eat! $80.00, contact Mini (718) 681-3746.

Baltimore

Friday, August 11-13, - Annual HINT OF HAWAII WEEKEND IN BALTIMORE MD. Buses will leave Friday morning and return Sunday evening. Contact Bobbi Moore (301) 596-6167.

SEPTEMBER

Atlanta

Sunday, September 3 - Prism announces their 3rd annual Buckhead Beach Party held at the Buckhead Town Club. 5 p.m. - 1 a.m. $10.00. Call (404) 344-6865

Saturday, September 9 - Youth conference on sexual orientation: a one day conference bringing together sexually diverse young folks, our friends, families, mentors and peers to share our life experiences and to talk about challenges facing Atlanta's youth as well as discuss survival skills, support available, and what is need to foster healthy living. Please join us. For more info, call Steve or Wendi at (404) 908-5368.

NY

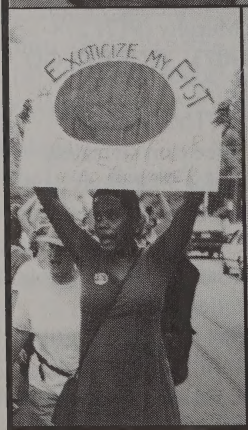
Saturday, September 2 - "Women of the '90's" presents "Our Family reunion" (Bonnie and Clyde Reunion). Contact Bess Knowing (718) 992-9073 for more info.

Saturday, September 9 - X-Centrics presents "An End of Summer Jam" at the South Oxford Club located at 187 South Oxford St. in Brooklyn from 11 p.m.- 5 a.m., tickets $30.00 in advance, open bar. Featuring special guest appearances, the music by: GHP. For more info & tickets contact: MD Murphy (917) 278-1649, Jackie Brantley (914) 972-3205, or Bess (718) 992-9073. TICKETS GO ON SALE JULY, 1995!!!

Monday September 11 - Saturday 16 - NJEMA announces "The Cruise of Distinction 1995!" Tour a total of five fabulous islands!! Free rum swizzles, happy hour, island bar-b-que, live reggae and calypso music for 5 fabulous days aboard a Caribbean Cruise. Join us aboard the yacht "Flying Cloud". For ticket information contact Bess Knowings at (718) 992-9073.

Saturday, September 16 - 4th Annual Oldtimers Softball Game & Picnic. Join us at FDR Park for a funfilled day of softball, basketball, volleyball, and relaxation!! Dust off those bats & gloves if you want to "play ball!" Free grills are available so come prepared to barbeque!! For further info., contact Barbara Rooks, (718) 429-6726, Bess Knowings (718) 992-9073 or Val / Julie (718) 379-4075.

OUT & ABOUT



Photos by Jena Jones and KES

ORGANIZATIONS

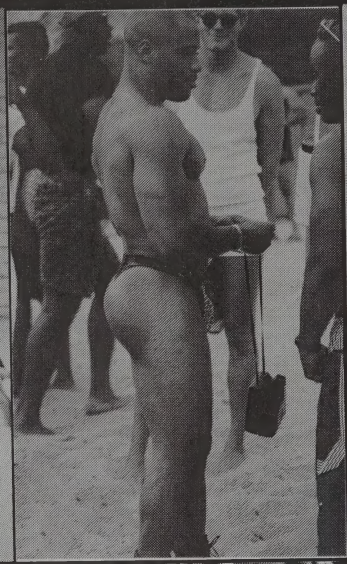
Send us your info! Additions, deletions, corrections, or expansions may be faxed to: (404) 622-8089 or mail to Venus Magazine, P.O. Box 89238, Atlanta, Georgia 30312

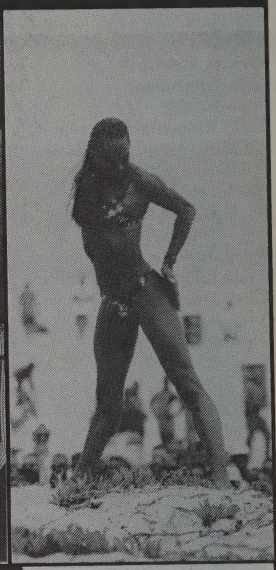
Abundant Grace Community Church, 743 Virginia Ave., Sunday worship- 7:30 PM. (404) 815-0036
African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change (Formerly Salsa Soul), (212) 620-7310, Candice
African American Lesbian Gay Alliance (AALGA), (404) 908-7371
Aids Education Services for Minorities (AESM) P.O. Box 87277, Atlanta, GA. 30337., (404) 753-2900, (404) 743-7733
AIDS Response Knoxville, Suite 411,109 Northshore Dr., Knoxville, TN 37919, (615) 450-2437
All Saints Metropolitan Community Church, 575 Boulevard. Sunday, 7:00 p.m., evenings, 8:30 p.m., (404) 622-1154.
Black Lesbian Gay Pride Inc., (BLGP Inc.), P.O. Box 7184, Washington D.C. 20024
Black Gay & Lesbian Leadership Forum, 1219 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90019, (213) 964-7820 fax: (213) 964-7830
Black & White Men Together, P.O. Box 1334, Atlanta, Ga. 30301-1334, (404) 892-BWMT
Black Lesbians With Children, (404) 498-3815
Black Women's Xchange (BWX) - Meets every Friday at 8:00p.m. at the Amassi Center. 3419 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way Oakland CA. For more info call Ms. Clydis (510) 649-0536
Boyz of Distinction, P.O. Box 78091, Atlanta, Ga. 30532
Brothers Back-2-Back, Inc., An African-American HIV/AIDS Organization. P.O. Box 11366, Atlanta, Georgia 30310, Voice: (404) 593-5805
Different Gyrl Production, PO Box 13346, Atlanta, GA 30324 (404) 908-5340
gabc - greater atlanta business coalition, 2103 N. Decatur Road, Suite 190, Decatur, GA 30033 Phone (404) 377-4258 Fax (404) 37708500
Gay & Out Productions, PO Box 111, Clarkston, GA 30021-0111 Phone (404) 299-7809 Fax (404) 508-8697
Gay Black Female, G.B.F., 6312 Hollywood Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California 90028 (310) 288-6315
The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011.
Gay/Lesbian Latino/a Comm. Organization. Out Reach Inc., (404) 346-3922, 1(800) 441-2437
Home Free Ministry, P.O. Box 688, Atlanta, Ga. 30301, (404) 818-2033
Hospitality Atlanta, (404) 627-1630
Lambada Car Club/Dogwood Region, (404) 901-9447
P.O. Box 11705, Atlanta, Ga. 30355
Las Buenas Amigas, (212) 868-7816, Carmen, The Gay and Lesbian Center, 208 W. 13th. St. N.Y., N.Y.10011
Latinos En Accion, Youth support group; P.O. Box 15388, Atlanta, Ga. 30325, (404) 621-5743
Yolanda Leeky - (404) 753-2840
Lesbians Latinos en Nuestro Ambiente, (707) 292-7705
LLEGO, National Latino/a Lesbian & Gay Organization, P.O. Box 44483, Washington D.C. 20026
National Assoc. Black & White Men Together, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C. 20020, (202) 462-3599
National Black Women's Health Project, 1237 Gordon S.W., Atlanta, Ga., (404) 758-9590
Our Cousin's House, An African-American AIDS organization. 1023 Dill Ave., Atlanta, GA 30310. (404) 756-9202.
Positive Black Lesbians United (PBLU), P.O. Box 655, Avondale Estates, Ga. 30002, (404) 250-7950
Project Open Hand Atlanta, (404) 525-4620, Home delivered meals for people with AIDS related illness
Project AZUKA, Inc., an AIDS organization for women. P.O. Box 9173, Savannah, GA 31402. (912) 233-6733
Redefined Faith Unity Fellowship Church, P.O. Box 50047, Atlanta, GA 30302. (404) 388-4624.
Second Sunday Discussion Group, P.O. Box 1574, Decatur, Ga. 30031, (404) 629-0583
Sisters of 30 Something Special, (404) 997-6240
Sister Love Inc., (404) 753-7733, (404) 753-1500
Sophisticated Ladies, Lesbian Social Group for Mature Women of Color (202) 788-1866
Spelman College Lesbian Bi-sexual Alliance, 710 Peachtree St. Suite 126, Atlanta, Ga. 30308, (404) 908-5368
TRIKONE, An asian, gay & Lesbian organization, trikatl@mindspring.com
Viva! Lesbian & Gay Latino, Arts Organization, (310) 301-8035
WRFG RADIO, Gay Graffiti, *w/ Deborah Paget*, Thurs. 7-8 p.m., **CROSSROADS**, w/ Baldeli Jones, 3rd Thurs. 7-8 p.m.**Sister Love, *Sister's Time*** 6:00 p.m., Thursdays; **AESM *Radio Outreach Show***, 2nd & 4th Friday at 6:00 p.m.
ZAMI, Atlanta's premiere African-American lesbian organization meets 2nd and 4th Sundays from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. Call (404) 370-1392

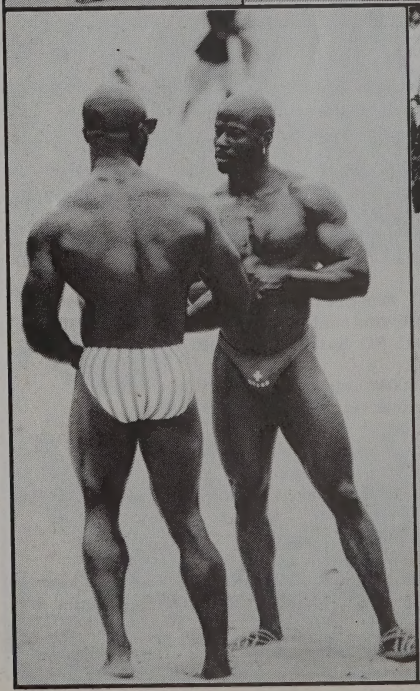
AT THE BEACH HOT SHOTS

Los Angeles

Point Dume Malibu







Photos by Ron Singleton

BUCKHEAD BEACH PARTY '3'

LABOR DAY WEEKEND

SUNDAY..SEPTEMBER 3, 1995

5pm - 1am

music by DJ Jolli K

$10.00
Per Person

Complimentary Snacks/CASH Bar
Complimentary Buffet/7pm-8pm

BUCKHEAD IN ATLANTA

For More Information or
To Have an Invitation Sent
CALL: (404) 344-6865

MORE DETAILS IN THE AUGUST ISSUE

PRIZM
Always an Affair of Quality

Venus
IN THE HOUSE!

House Party at the Venus office
Saturday July 22, 10 p.m. - 4 a.m.

616 Ormewood Ave., SE
Cash Bar 2 Bid Tables
Suggested Donation: $5.00
(No High Heels Please!)

D.J. Cyndi

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